

# Three Men in a Boat

Jerome

ULTRA-ANNOTATED EDITION

Surrounding Villages

ENTIRE NEW PLAN

In which the

new roads will pursue 1000

in proportion to the

General Proprietors

and the new roads will pursue 1000

in proportion to the

old roads.

Currently exceeding the present 1000

by

Hammond & Co. 1860









# THREE MEN IN A BOAT

( *TO SAY NOTHING OF THE DOG* )

**ULTRA-ANNOTATED EDITION**

BY

JEROME K. JEROME

AUTHOR OF

"IDLE THOUGHTS OF AN IDLE FELLOW," "STAGE LAND," ETC.

*ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. FREDERICS*

1889

**Three Men in a Boat**

by Jerome K. Jerome

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## NOTES ON THE ANNOTATED EDITION

While annotating *Three Men in a Boat* was an interesting, informative and rewarding experience, I found several words which, if annotated consistently, would probably drive the reader crazy. In those instances, I annotated only a few occurrences. In particular,

1. the word *upset* can mean several things depending on context. For example, it can mean *to agitate*, but it can also mean *to overturn or disturb something*, such as a boat. I'll leave it up to you, gentle Reader, to discern the appropriate meaning from context.
2. the word *row*, similar to *upset* above, can mean several things depending on context. For example, it can mean *to row a boat* or *a row of chairs*. In this case, you pronounce the word rhyming with *Oh!*. But, it can also mean *to have an argument*. In that case, you pronounce it rhyming with *Ow!*.
3. the occurrence of words spelled using *ou* and *re* appear throughout. Since this book was written by an Englishman, it's to be expected. For example, *honour*, instead of *honor*, and *centre*, instead of *center*. I annotated only a few of these assuming you'd get the point. I hope you're all *oukay* with that. ☺

Finally, if you find an error in the annotations, disagree with an explanation, would like something expanded upon, etc., please feel free to e-mail me at [tmiab@ultra-annotated-books.com](mailto:tmiab@ultra-annotated-books.com).



## BIOGRAPHY: JEROME K. JEROME \*

**Jerome Klapka Jerome** (2 May 1859 – 14 June 1927) was an English writer and humourist, best known for the comic travelogue *Three Men in a Boat* (1889). Other works include the essay collections *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* (1886) and *Second Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*; *Three Men on the Bummel*, a sequel to *Three Men in a Boat*; and several other novels. Jerome was born in Walsall, England, and, although he was able to attend grammar school, his family suffered from poverty at times, as did he as a young man trying to earn a living in various occupations. In his twenties, he was able to publish some work, and success followed. He married in 1888, and the honeymoon was spent on a boat on the Thames; he published *Three Men in a Boat* soon afterwards. He continued to write fiction, non-fiction and plays over the next few decades, though never with the same level of success.



### Early life

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Jerome was born at Belsize House, 1 Caldmore Road, in Caldmore, Walsall, England. He was the fourth child of Marguerite Jones and Jerome Clapp (who later renamed himself Jerome Clapp Jerome), an ironmonger and lay preacher who dabbled in architecture. He had two sisters, Paulina and Blandina, and one brother, Milton, who died at an early age. Jerome was registered as Jerome Clapp Jerome, like his father's amended name, and the Klapka appears to be a later

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\* "Jerome K. Jerome", *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 08 Feb 2023, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome\\_K.\\_Jerome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome_K._Jerome). Please see article for Jerome's legacy and bibliography as well as footnotes and references.

variation (after the exiled Hungarian general György Klapka). The family fell into poverty owing to bad investments in the local mining industry, and debt collectors visited often, an experience that Jerome described vividly in his autobiography *My Life and Times* (1926). At the age of two Jerome moved with his parents to Stourbridge, Worcestershire, then later to East London.

The young Jerome attended St Marylebone Grammar School. He wished to go into politics or be a man of letters, but the death of his father when Jerome was 13 and of his mother when he was 15 forced him to quit his studies and find work to support himself. He was employed at the London and North Western Railway, initially collecting coal that fell along the railway, and he remained there for four years.

### Acting career and early literary works

Jerome was inspired by his elder sister Blandina's love for the theatre, and he decided to try his hand at acting in 1877, under the stage name Harold Crichton. He joined a repertory troupe that produced plays on a shoestring budget, often drawing on the actors' own meagre resources – Jerome was penniless at the time – to purchase costumes and props. After three years on the road with no evident success, the 21-year-old Jerome decided that he had enough of stage life and sought other occupations. He tried to become a journalist, writing essays, satires, and short stories, but most of these were rejected. Over the next few years, he was a school teacher, a packer, and a solicitor's clerk. Finally, in 1885, he had some success with *On the Stage – and Off* (1885), a comic memoir of his experiences with the acting troupe, followed by *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* (1886), a collection of humorous essays which had previously appeared in the newly founded magazine, *Home Chimes*, the same magazine that would later serialise *Three Men in a Boat*.

On 21 June 1888, Jerome married Georgina Elizabeth Henrietta Stanley Marris ("Ettie"), nine days after she divorced her first

husband. She had a daughter from her previous five-year marriage nicknamed Elsie (her actual name was also Georgina). The honeymoon took place on the Thames "in a little boat," a fact that was to have a significant influence on his next and most important work, *Three Men in a Boat*.

### Three Men in a Boat and later career

Jerome sat down to write *Three Men in a Boat* as soon as the couple returned from their honeymoon. In the novel, his wife was replaced by his longtime friends George Wingrave (George) and Carl Hentschel (Harris). This allowed him to create comic (and non-sentimental) situations which were nonetheless intertwined with the history of the Thames region. The book, published in 1889, became an instant success and has never been out of print. Its popularity was such that the number of registered Thames boats went up fifty percent in the year following its publication, and it contributed significantly to the Thames becoming a tourist attraction. In its first twenty years alone, the book sold over a million copies worldwide. It has been adapted into films, TV, radio shows, stage plays, and even a musical. Its writing style has influenced many humourists and satirists in England and elsewhere.

With the financial security that the sales of the book provided, Jerome was able to dedicate all of his time to writing. He wrote a number of plays, essays, and novels, but was never able to recapture the success of *Three Men in a Boat*. In 1892, he was chosen by Robert Barr to edit *The Idler* (over Rudyard Kipling). The magazine was an illustrated satirical monthly catering to gentlemen (who, following the theme of the publication, appreciated idleness). In 1893, he founded



*To-Day*, but had to withdraw from both publications because of financial difficulties and a libel suit.

Jerome's play *Biarritz* had a run of two months at the Prince of Wales Theatre between April and June 1896.

In 1898, a short stay in Germany inspired *Three Men on the Bummel*, the sequel to *Three Men in a Boat*, reintroducing the same characters in the setting of a foreign bicycle tour. The book was nonetheless unable quite to recapture the sheer comic energy and historic rootedness of its celebrated predecessor (lacking as it does the unifying thread that is the river Thames itself) and it has enjoyed only modest success by comparison. This said, some of the individual comic vignettes that make up "Bummel" are as fine as (or even finer than) those of "Boat".

In 1902, he published the novel *Paul Kelver*, which is widely regarded as autobiographical. His 1908 play *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* introduced a more sombre and religious Jerome. The main character was played by one of the leading actors of the time, Johnston Forbes-Robertson, and the play was a tremendous commercial success. It was twice made into film, in 1918 and in 1935. However, the play was condemned by critics – Max Beerbohm described it as "vilely stupid" and as written by a "tenth-rate writer".

## First World War and last years

Jerome volunteered to serve his country at the outbreak of the First World War but being 55 years old, he was rejected by the British Army. Eager to serve in some capacity, he volunteered as an ambulance driver for the French Army. In 1926, Jerome published his autobiography, *My Life and Times*. Shortly afterwards, the Borough of Walsall conferred on him the title Freeman of the Borough. During these last years, Jerome spent more time at his farmhouse Gould's Grove south-east of Ewelme near Wallingford.

Jerome suffered a paralytic stroke and a cerebral haemorrhage in June 1927, on a motoring tour from Devon to London via Cheltenham and Northampton. He lay in Northampton General Hospital for two weeks before dying on 14 June. He was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium and his ashes buried at St Mary's Church, Ewelme, Oxfordshire. Elsie, Ettie and his sister Blandina are buried beside him. His gravestone reads "For we are labourers together with God". A small museum dedicated to his life and works was opened in 1984 at his birth home in Walsall, but it closed in 2008 and the contents were returned to Walsall Museum.





## THREE MEN IN A BOAT: OVERVIEW \*

***Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)***, published in 1889, is a humorous account by English writer Jerome K. Jerome of a two-week boating holiday on the Thames from Kingston upon Thames to Oxford and back to Kingston. The book was initially intended to be a serious travel guide, with accounts of local history along the route, but the humorous elements took over to the point where the serious and somewhat sentimental passages seem a distraction to the comic novel. One of the most praised things about *Three Men in a Boat* is how undated it appears to modern readers – the jokes have been praised as fresh and witty.

The three men are based on Jerome himself (the narrator Jerome K. Jerome) and two real-life friends, George Wingrave (who would become a senior manager at Barclays Bank) and Carl Hentschel (the founder of a London printing business, called Harris in the book), with whom Jerome often took boating trips. The dog, Montmorency, is entirely fictional but, "as Jerome admits, developed out of that area of inner consciousness which, in all Englishmen, contains an element of the dog". The trip is a typical boating holiday of the time in a Thames camping skiff.

Following the overwhelming success of *Three Men in a Boat*, Jerome later published a sequel, about a cycling tour in Germany, titled *Three Men on the Bummel* (also known as *Three Men on Wheels*, 1900).

### Summary

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The story begins by introducing George, Harris, Jerome (always referred to as "J."), and Jerome's dog, named Montmorency. The men are spending an evening in J.'s room, smoking and discussing

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\* "Three Men in a Boat", *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 06 Feb 2023, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_Men\\_in\\_a\\_Boat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Men_in_a_Boat). Please see article for footnotes and references.

illnesses from which they fancy they suffer. They conclude that they are all suffering from "overwork", and need a holiday. A stay in the country and a sea trip are both considered. The country stay is rejected because Harris claims that it would be dull, and the sea-trip after J. describes bad experiences his brother-in-law and a friend had on previous sea-trips. The three eventually decide on a boating holiday up the River Thames, from Kingston upon Thames to Oxford, during which they will camp, notwithstanding more of J.'s anecdotes about previous mishaps with tents and camping stoves.

They set off the following Saturday. George must go to work that morning, so J. and Harris make their way to Kingston by train. They cannot find the right train at Waterloo station (the station's confusing layout was a well-known theme of Victorian comedy) so they bribe a train driver to take his train to Kingston, where they collect the hired boat and start the journey. They meet George further up-river at Weybridge.

The remainder of the story describes their river journey and the incidents that occur. The book's original purpose as a guidebook is apparent as J., the narrator, describes passing landmarks and villages such as Hampton Court Palace, Hampton Church, Magna Carta Island and Monkey Island, and muses on historical associations of these places. However, he frequently digresses into humorous anecdotes that range from the unreliability of barometers for weather forecasting to the difficulties encountered when learning to play the Scottish bagpipes. The most frequent topics of J.'s anecdotes are river pastimes such as fishing and boating and the difficulties they present to the inexperienced and unwary and to the three men on previous boating trips.

The book includes classic comedy set pieces, such as the Plaster of Paris trout in chapter 17, and the "Irish stew" in chapter 14 – made by mixing most of the leftovers in the party's food hamper:

I forgot the other ingredients, but I know nothing was wasted; and I remember that, towards the end, Montmorency, who had evinced great interest in the proceedings throughout, strolled away with an earnest and thoughtful air, reappearing, a few minutes afterwards, with a dead water-rat in his mouth, which he evidently wished to present as his contribution to the dinner; whether in a sarcastic spirit, or with a genuine desire to assist, I cannot say.

— Chapter 16

## Reception

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One might have imagined ... that the British Empire was in danger. ... The Standard spoke of me as a menace to English letters; and The Morning Post as an example of the sad results to be expected from the over-education of the lower orders. ... I think I may claim to have been, for the first twenty years of my career, the best abused author in England.

— Jerome K. Jerome, *My Life and Times* (1926)

The reception by critics varied between lukewarm and hostile. The use of slang was condemned as "vulgar" and the book was derided as written to appeal to "'Arrys and 'Arriets" – then common sneering terms for working-class Londoners who dropped their Hs when speaking. *Punch* magazine dubbed Jerome "'Arry K. 'Arry". Modern commentators have praised the humour, but criticised the book's unevenness, as the humorous sections are interspersed with more serious passages written in a sentimental, sometimes purple, style.

Yet the book sold in huge numbers. "I pay Jerome so much in royalties", the publisher told a friend, "I cannot imagine what becomes of all the copies of that book I issue. I often think the public must eat them." The first edition was published in August 1889 and serialised in the magazine *Home Chimes* in the same year. The first edition remained in print from 1889 until March 1909, when the second edition was issued. During that time, 202,000 copies

were sold. In his introduction to the 1909 second edition, Jerome states that he had been told another million copies had been sold in America by pirate printers. The book was translated into many languages. The Russian edition was particularly successful and became a standard school textbook. Jerome later complained in a letter to *The Times* of Russian books not written by him, published under his name to benefit from his success. Since its publication, *Three Men in a Boat* has never been out of print. It continues to be popular, with *The Guardian* ranking it No. 33 of The 100 Greatest Novels of All Time in 2003, and no. 25 in 2015 and *Esquire* ranking it No. 2 in the 50 Funniest Books Ever in 2009. In 2003, the book was listed on the BBC's survey The Big Read.

## In Popular Culture

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The river trip is easy to recreate, following the detailed description, and this is sometimes done by fans of the book. Much of the route remains unchanged. For example, all the pubs and inns named are still open.

### Audio

Audiobooks of the book have been released many times, with different narrators, including Sir Timothy Ackroyd (2013), Hugh Laurie (1999), Nigel Planer (1999), Martin Jarvis (2005) and Steven Crossley (2011).

The BBC has broadcast on radio a number of dramatisations of the story, including a musical version in 1962 starring Kenneth Horne, Leslie Phillips and Hubert Gregg, a three-episode version in 1984 with Jeremy Nicholas playing all of the characters and a two-part adaptation for Classic Serial in 2013 with Hugh Dennis, Steve Punt and Julian Rhind-Tutt.

## Film and Television

1. *Three Men in a Boat*, a 1920 silent British film with Lionelle Howard as J., H. Manning Haynes as Harris and Johnny Butt as George.
2. *Three Men in a Boat*, a 1933 British film with William Austin, Edmund Breon, and Billy Milton.
3. *Three Men in a Boat*, a 1956 British film with David Tomlinson as J., Jimmy Edwards as Harris and Laurence Harvey as George.
4. *Three Men in a Boat*, a 1961 German film very loosely based on the book.
5. *Three Men in a Boat*, a 1975 BBC-produced version for television adapted by Tom Stoppard and directed by Stephen Frears, with Tim Curry as J., Michael Palin as Harris, and Stephen Moore as George.
6. *Three Men in a Boat* (Russian: Трое в лодке, не считая собаки), a 1979, musical comedy filmed by Soviet television, with Andrei Mironov as J., Aleksandr Shirvindt as Harris and Mikhail Derzhavin as George.

Peter Lovesey's Victorian detective novel *Swing, Swing Together* (1976), partly based on the book, featured as the second episode of the television series *Cribb* (1980).

In 2005 the comedians Griff Rhys Jones, Dara Ó Briain, and Rory McGrath embarked on a recreation of the novel for what was to become a regular yearly BBC TV series, *Three Men in a Boat*. Their first expedition was along the Thames from Kingston upon Thames to Oxford, recreating the original novel.

## Theatre

A stage adaptation earned Jeremy Nicholas a Best Newcomer in a Play nomination at the 1981 Laurence Olivier Awards. The book was adapted by Clive Francis for a 2006 production that toured the UK.

## Art

A sculpture of a stylised boat was created in 1999 to commemorate *Three Men in a Boat* on the Millennium Green in New Southgate, London, where the author lived as a child. In 2012 a mosaic of a dog's head was put onto the same Green to commemorate Montmorency.

## Other Works of Literature

In 1891, *Three Women in One Boat: A River Sketch* by Constance MacEwen was published. This book relates the journey of three young university women who set out to emulate the river trip in *Three Men in a Boat* in an effort to raise the spirits of one of them, who is about to be expelled from university. To take the place of Montmorency, they bring a cat called Tintoretto.

P. G. Wodehouse mentions the Plaster of Paris trout in his 1910 novel *Psmith in the City*. Psmith's boss, while delivering a political speech, pretends to have personally experienced a succession of men claiming to have caught a fake trout. Psmith interrupts the speech to "let him know that a man named Jerome had pinched his story."

*Three Men in a Boat* is referenced in the 1956 parody novel on mountaineering, *The Ascent of Rum Doodle*, where the head porter Bing is said to spend "much of his leisure immersed in a Yogistani translation of it."

In *Have Space Suit—Will Travel*, by Robert A. Heinlein (1958), the main character's father is an obsessive fan of the book, and spends much of his spare time repeatedly re-reading it.

The book *Three Men (Not) in a Boat: and Most of the Time Without a Dog* (1983, republished 2011) by Timothy Finn is a loosely related novel about a walking trip.

A re-creation in 1993 by poet Kim Taplin and companions resulted in the travelogue *Three Women in a Boat*.

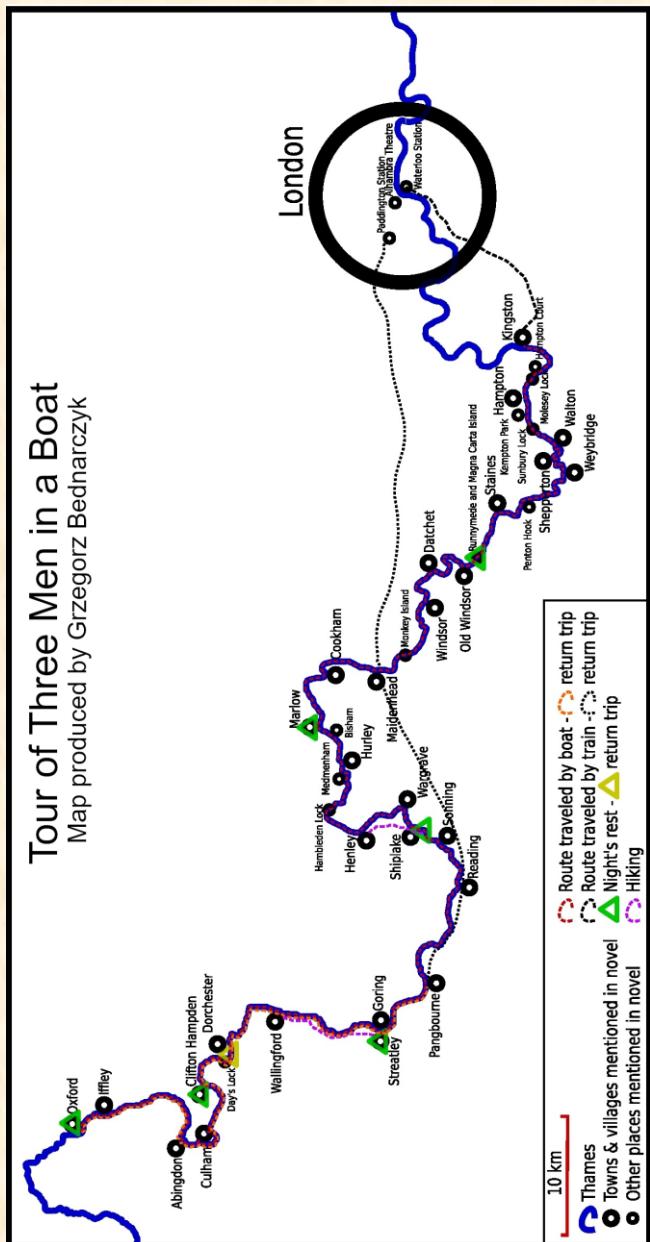
*Gita sul Tevere* is an Italian humorous book inspired by this famous English novel.

Science fiction author Connie Willis paid tribute to Jerome's novel in her own 1997 Hugo Award-winning book *To Say Nothing of the Dog*. Her time-travelling protagonist also takes an ill-fated voyage on the Thames with two humans and a dog as companions, and encounters George, Harris, 'J' and Montmorency. The title of Willis' novel refers to the full title of the original book.

Fantasy author Harry Turtledove wrote a set of stories in which Jerome's characters encounter supernatural creatures: "Three Men and a Vampire" and "Three Men and a Werewolf" were published in *Some Time Later: Fantastic Voyages in Alternate Worlds* (2017). "Three Men and a Sasquatch" was published in Next Stop on the #13 in 2019.

Anne Youngson wrote *Three Women and a Boat* (Penguin, 2021), about three middle-aged strangers setting off on an adventure in a narrowboat. The novel was chosen for BBC Radio 2 Book Club.





Map of tour taken by Three Men in a Boat produced by Grzegorz Bednarczyk.



## PREFACE

*The chief beauty of this book lies not so much in its literary style, or in the extent and usefulness of the information it conveys, as in its simple truthfulness. Its pages form the record of events that really happened. All that has been done is to colour them; and, for this, no extra charge has been made. George and Harris and Montmorency are not poetic ideals, but things of flesh and blood—especially George, who weighs about twelve stone. Other works may excel this in depth of thought and knowledge of human nature: other books may rival it in originality and size; but, for hopeless and incurable veracity, nothing yet discovered can surpass it. This, more than all its other charms, will, it is felt, make the volume precious in the eye of the earnest reader; and will lend additional weight to the lesson that the story teaches.*

LONDON, August 1889



# THREE MEN IN A BOAT



James McNeill Whistler (American, 1834-1903)  
*Black Lion Wharf*, 1859 (published 1871)  
Etching with foul biting in black on off-white laid paper  
The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER I

*Three invalids.—Sufferings of George and Harris.—A victim to one hundred and seven fatal maladies.—Useful prescriptions.—Cure for liver complaint in children.—We agree that we are overworked, and need rest.—A week on the rolling deep?—George suggests the River.—Montmorency lodges an objection.—Original motion carried by majority of three to one.*

**T**here were four of us—George, and William Samuel Harris, and myself, and Montmorency. We were sitting in my room, smoking, and talking about how bad we were—bad from a medical point of view I mean, of course.

We were all feeling seedy[physically run-down], and we were getting quite nervous about it. Harris said he felt such extraordinary fits of giddiness[dizziness] come over him at times, that he hardly knew what he was doing; and then George said that *he* had fits of giddiness too, and hardly knew what *he* was doing. With me, it was my liver that was out of order. I knew it was my liver that was out of order, because I had just been reading a patent liver-pill circular[a *circular* is a printed sheet distributed to advertise or inform; a *patent circular* advertises approved patents; a *patent liver-pill circular* advertises a newly approved patent for a liver pill], in which were detailed the various symptoms by which a man could tell when his liver was out of order. I had them all.

It is a most extraordinary thing, but I never read a patent medicine advertisement without being impelled[driven or urged

forward] to the conclusion that I am suffering from the particular disease therein dealt with in its most virulent form. The diagnosis seems in every case to correspond exactly with all the sensations that I have ever felt.

I remember going to the British Museum one day to read up the treatment for some slight ailment of which I had a touch—hay fever, I fancy it was. I got down the book, and read all I came to read; and then, in an unthinking moment, I idly turned the leaves[pages], and began to indolently[lazily] study diseases, generally. I forgot which was the first distemper [disorder or disease] I plunged into—some fearful, devastating scourge, I know—and, before I had glanced half down the list of "premonitory[early warning] symptoms," it was borne [realized] in upon me that I had fairly got it.

I sat for awhile, frozen with horror; and then, in the listlessness of despair, I again turned over the pages. I came to typhoid fever—read the symptoms—discovered that I had typhoid fever, must have had it for months without knowing it—wondered what else I had got; turned up St. Vitus's Dance[a neurological disorder involving involuntary movement; generally referred to *chorea*, such as *Huntington's Chorea*, nowadays]—found, as I expected, that I had that too,—began to get interested in my case, and determined to sift it to the bottom, and so started alphabetically—read up ague[usually, *malaria*], and learnt that I was sickening for it, and that the acute stage would commence in about another fortnight[two weeks]. Bright's disease[kidney disease now referred to as *nephritis*], I was relieved to find, I had only in a modified form, and, so far as that was concerned, I might live for years. Cholera[an infection of the small intestines caused by the bacteria *Vibrio cholerae*] I had, with severe complications; and diphtheria[an infection caused by the bacteria *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*] I seemed to have been born with. I plodded conscientiously through the twenty-six letters, and the only malady I could conclude I had not got was housemaid's knee[painful swelling at the front of the knee].

I felt rather hurt about this at first; it seemed somehow to be a sort of slight. Why hadn't I got housemaid's knee? Why this invidious[discriminating unfairly] reservation? After a while, however, less



grasping[greedy] feelings prevailed. I reflected that I had every other known malady in the pharmacology, and I grew less selfish, and determined to do without housemaid's knee. Gout[painful, recurrent arthritis in certain joints], in its most malignant[harmful] stage, it would appear, had seized me without my being aware of it; and zymosis[an infectious disease] I had evidently been suffering with from boyhood. There were no more diseases after zymosis, so I concluded there was nothing else the matter with me.

I sat and pondered. I thought what an interesting case I must be from a medical point of view, what an acquisition I should be to a class! Students would have no need to "walk the hospitals," if they had me. I was a hospital in myself. All they need do would be to walk round me, and, after that, take their diploma.

Then I wondered how long I had to live. I tried to examine myself. I felt my pulse. I could not at first feel any pulse at all. Then, all of a sudden, it seemed to start off. I pulled out my watch and timed it. I made it a hundred and forty-seven to the minute. I tried to feel my heart. I could not feel my heart. It had stopped beating. I have since been induced to come to the opinion that it must have been there all the time, and must have been beating, but I cannot account for it. I patted myself all over my front, from what I call my waist up to my head, and I went a bit round each side, and a little way up the back. But I could not feel or hear anything. I tried to look at my tongue. I stuck it out as far as ever it would go, and I shut one eye, and tried to examine it with the other. I could only see the tip, and the only thing that I could gain from that was to feel more certain than before that I had scarlet fever[an infectious disease caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes*].

I had walked into that reading-room a happy, healthy man. I crawled out a decrepit wreck.

I went to my medical man. He is an old chum[friend] of mine, and feels my pulse, and looks at my tongue, and talks about the weather, all for nothing, when I fancy I'm ill; so I thought I would do him a good turn by going to him now. "What a doctor wants[lacks]," I said, "is practice. He shall have me. He will get more practice out of me than out of seventeen hundred of your ordinary, commonplace patients, with only one or two diseases each." So I went straight up and saw him, and he said:

"Well, what's the matter with you?"



I said:

"I will not take up your time, dear boy, with telling you what is the matter with me. Life is brief, and you might pass away before I had finished. But I will tell you what is *not* the matter with me. I have not got housemaid's knee. Why I have not got housemaid's knee, I cannot tell you; but the fact remains that I have not got it. Everything else, however, I *have* got."

And I told him how I came to discover it all.

Then he opened me and looked down me, and clutched hold of my wrist, and then he hit me over the chest when I wasn't expecting it—a cowardly thing to do, I call it—and immediately afterwards butted[*struck*] me with the side of his head. After that, he sat down and wrote out a prescription, and folded it up and gave it me, and I put it in my pocket and went out.

I did not open it. I took it to the nearest chemist's[pharmacist's or pharmacy], and handed it in. The man read it, and then handed it back.

He said he didn't keep it[have the items in stock].

I said:

"You are a chemist?"

He said:

"I am a chemist. If I was a co-operative stores and family hotel combined, I might be able to oblige you. Being only a chemist hampers me."

I read the prescription. It ran:

"1 lb. beefsteak, with

1 pt. bitter beer every 6 hours.

1 ten-mile walk every morning.

1 bed at 11 sharp every night.

And don't stuff up your head with things you don't understand."

I followed the directions, with the happy result—speaking for myself—that my life was preserved, and is still going on.

In the present instance, going back to the liver-pill circular, I had the symptoms, beyond all mistake, the chief among them being "a general disinclination to work of any kind."

What I suffer in that way no tongue can tell. From my earliest infancy I have been a martyr[person who suffers] to it. As a boy, the disease hardly ever left me for a day. They did not know, then, that it was my liver. Medical science was in a far less advanced state than now, and they used to put it down to laziness.

"Why, you skulking[avoiding duty] little devil, you," they would say, "get up and do something for your living, can't you?"—not knowing, of course, that I was ill.

And they didn't give me pills; they gave me clumps[firm slaps] on the side of the head. And, strange as it may appear, those clumps on the head often cured me—for the time being. I have known one clump on the head have more effect upon my liver, and make me feel more anxious to go straight away then and there, and do what was wanted to be done, without further loss of time, than a whole box of pills does now.

You know, it often is so—those simple, old-fashioned remedies are sometimes more efficacious[effective] than all the dispensary[place where medicines are dispensed] stuff.

We sat there for half-an-hour, describing to each other our maladies. I explained to George and William Harris how I felt when I got up in the morning, and William Harris told us how he felt when he went to bed; and George stood on the hearth-rug, and gave us a clever and powerful piece of acting, illustrative of how he felt in the night.

George *fancies* he is ill; but there's never anything really the matter with him, you know.

At this point, Mrs. Poppets knocked at the door to know if we were ready for supper. We smiled sadly at one another, and said we supposed we had better try to swallow a bit. Harris said a little something in one's stomach often kept the disease in check; and Mrs. Poppets brought the tray in, and we drew up to the table, and toyed with a little steak and onions, and some rhubarb tart.

I must have been very weak at the time; because I know, after the first half-hour or so, I seemed to take no interest whatever in my food—an unusual thing for me—and I didn't want any cheese.

This duty done, we refilled our glasses, lit our pipes, and resumed the discussion upon our state of health. What it was that was actually the matter with us, we none of us could be sure of; but the

unanimous opinion was that it—whatever it was—had been brought on by overwork.

"What we want is rest," said Harris.

"Rest and a complete change," said George. "The overstrain upon our brains has produced a general depression throughout the system. Change of scene, and absence of the necessity for thought, will restore the mental equilibrium[balance]."

George has a cousin, who is usually described in the charge-sheet[a document filled in by a police officer detailing criminal charges brought upon an accused] as a medical student, so that he naturally has a somewhat family-physicianary way of putting things.

I agreed with George, and suggested that we should seek out some retired[secluded] and old-world spot, far from the madding [insane] crowd, and dream away a sunny week among its drowsy lanes—some half-forgotten nook, hidden away by the fairies, out of reach of the noisy world—some quaint-perched eyrie[in this sense, a building high on a hill] on the cliffs of Time[capital T, usually signifying eternity, or all of history], from whence the surging waves of the nineteenth century would sound far-off and faint.

Harris said he thought it would be humpy[gloomy]. He said he knew the sort of place I meant; where everybody went to bed at eight o'clock, and you couldn't get a *Referee*[*The Referee*, or *The Sunday Referee*, was a newspaper founded in 1877 in the United Kingdom covering sports news] for love or money, and had to walk ten miles to get your baccy[tobacco].

"No," said Harris, "if you want rest and change, you can't beat a sea trip."

I objected to the sea trip strongly. A sea trip does you good when you are going to have a couple of months of it, but, for a week, it is wicked.

You start on Monday with the idea implanted in your bosom[the supposed seat of the passions and operations of the mind] that you are going to enjoy yourself. You wave an airy adieu[good bye in French] to the boys on shore, light your biggest pipe, and swagger about the deck as if you were Captain Cook, Sir Francis Drake, and Christopher Columbus all rolled into one. On Tuesday, you wish you hadn't come. On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, you wish you were dead. On Saturday, you are able to swallow a little beef

tea[meat extract paste (similar to the brand Bovril) mixed with hot water], and to sit up on deck, and answer with a wan[suggestive of ill health], sweet smile when kind-hearted people ask you how you feel now. On Sunday, you begin to walk about again, and take solid food. And on Monday morning, as, with your bag and umbrella in your hand, you stand by the gunwale[pronounced *gunnel*; upper rim of a boat's hull serving as structural reinforcement], waiting to step ashore, you begin to thoroughly like it.

I remember my brother-in-law going for a short sea trip once, for the benefit of his health. He took a return[round trip; return ticket] berth[a room on a ship] from London to Liverpool; and when he got to Liverpool, the only thing he was anxious about was to sell that return ticket.

It was offered round the town at a tremendous reduction, so I am told; and was eventually sold for eighteenpence[18 pence; prior to 15 February 1971, known as Decimal Day in the United Kingdom, one British pound (£) was divided into 20 shillings (s), itself divided into 12 pence (d), or 240 pence to a pound] to a bilious[sickly]-looking youth who had just been advised by his medical men to go to the sea-side, and take exercise.

"Sea-side!" said my brother-in-law, pressing the ticket affectionately into his hand; "why, you'll have enough to last you a lifetime; and as for exercise! why, you'll get more exercise, sitting down on that ship, than you would turning somersaults on dry land."

He himself—my brother-in-law—came back by train. He said the Northwestern Railway was healthy enough for him.

Another fellow I knew went for a week's voyage round the coast, and, before they started, the steward came to him to ask whether he would pay for each meal as he had it, or arrange beforehand for the whole series.

The steward recommended the latter course, as it would come so much cheaper. He said they would do him for the whole week at two pounds five[£2 5s]. He said for breakfast there would be fish, followed by a grill. Lunch was at one, and consisted of four courses.



Dinner at six—soup, fish, entree, joint, poultry, salad, sweets, cheese, and dessert. And a light meat supper at ten.

My friend thought he would close on the two-pound-five job (he is a hearty eater), and did so.

Lunch came just as they were off Sheerness [a port town located north of county Kent, southeastern England]. He didn't feel so hungry as he thought he should, and so contented himself with a bit of boiled beef, and some strawberries and cream. He pondered a good deal during the afternoon, and at one time it seemed to him that he had been eating nothing but boiled beef for weeks, and at other times it seemed that he must have been living on strawberries and cream for years.



Neither the beef nor the strawberries and cream seemed happy, either—seemed discontented like.

At six, they came and told him dinner was ready. The announcement aroused no enthusiasm within him, but he felt that there was some of that two-pound-five to be worked off, and he held on to ropes and things and went down. A pleasant odour [odor] of onions and hot ham, mingled with fried fish and greens, greeted him at the bottom of the ladder; and then the steward came up with an oily smile, and said:



"What can I get you, sir?"

"Get me out of this," was the feeble reply.

And they ran him up quick, and propped him up, over to leeward [downwind side], and left him.

For the next four days he lived a simple and blameless life on thin captain's biscuits (I mean that the biscuits were thin, not the captain) and soda water; but, towards Saturday, he got uppish [slightly bold], and went in for weak tea and dry toast, and on Monday he was gorging himself on chicken broth. He left the ship on Tuesday, and as it steamed away from the landing-stage he gazed after it regretfully.

"There she goes," he said, "there she goes, with two pounds' worth of food on board that belongs to me, and that I haven't had."

He said that if they had given him another day he thought he could have put it straight[that is, got his 2 pounds' worth].

So I set my face against the sea trip. Not, as I explained, upon my own account. I was never queer[queasy]. But I was afraid for George. George said he should be all right, and would rather like it, but he would advise Harris and me not to think of it, as he felt sure we should both be ill. Harris said that, to himself, it was always a mystery how people managed to get sick at sea—said he thought people must do it on purpose, from affectation[attempting to impress]—said he had often wished to be, but had never been able.

Then he told us anecdotes of how he had gone across the Channel[English Channel, the body of water separating England and France] when it was so rough that the passengers had to be tied into their berths, and he and the captain were the only two living souls on board who were not ill. Sometimes it was he and the second mate who were not ill; but it was generally he and one other man. If not he and another man, then it was he by himself.

It is a curious fact, but nobody ever is seasick—on land. At sea, you come across plenty of people very bad indeed, whole boat-loads of them; but I never met a man yet, on land, who had ever known at all what it was to be seasick. Where the thousands upon thousands of bad sailors that swarm in every ship hide themselves when they are on land is a mystery.

If most men were like a fellow I saw on the Yarmouth boat one day, I could account for the seeming enigma [mystery] easily enough. It was just off Southend Pier[the longest pleasure pier in the world located in Essex, southeastern England; the original timber pier



Southend Pier (Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century)

was replace by an iron pier and opened to the public in 1889, the same year *Three Men in a Boat* was published], I recollect, and he was leaning out through one of the port-holes in a very dangerous position. I went up to him to try and save him.

"Hi! come further in," I said, shaking him by the shoulder. "You'll be overboard."

"Oh my! I wish I was," was the only answer I could get; and there I had to leave him.

Three weeks afterwards, I met him in the coffee-room of a Bath[a city located in southwestern England in county Somerset] hotel, talking about his voyages, and explaining, with enthusiasm, how he loved the sea.

"Good sailor!" he replied in answer to a mild young man's envious query; "well, I did feel a little queer *once*, I confess. It was off Cape Horn[southernmost point in South America]. The vessel was wrecked the next morning."

I said:

"Weren't you a little shaky by Southend Pier one day, and wanted to be thrown overboard?"

"Southend Pier!" he replied, with a puzzled expression.

"Yes; going down to Yarmouth, last Friday three weeks [ago]."

"Oh, ah—yes," he answered, brightening up; "I remember now. I did have a headache that afternoon. It was the pickles, you know. They were the most disgraceful pickles I ever tasted in a respectable boat. Did *you* have any?"

For myself, I have discovered an excellent preventive against seasickness, in balancing myself. You stand in the centre of the deck, and, as the ship heaves and pitches, you move your body about, so as to keep it always straight. When the front of the ship rises, you lean forward, till the deck almost touches your nose; and when its back end gets up, you lean backwards. This is all very well for an hour or two; but you can't balance yourself for a week.

George said:

"Let's go up the river."



He said we should have fresh air, exercise and quiet; the constant change of scene would occupy our minds (including what there was of Harris's); and the hard work would give us a good appetite, and make us sleep well.

Harris said he didn't think George ought to do anything that would have a tendency to make him sleepier than he always was, as it might be dangerous. He said he didn't very well understand how George was going to sleep any more than he did now, seeing that there were only twenty-four hours in each day, summer and winter alike; but thought that if he *did* sleep any more, he might just as well be dead, and so save his board and lodging.

Harris said, however, that the river would suit him to a "T." [the phrase *to suit (one) to a T* means *to be in line with one's tastes or interests*] I don't know what a "T" is (except a sixpenny one, which includes bread-and-butter and cake *ad lib.* [abbreviation for the Latin phrase *ad libitum* meaning *at one's pleasure*]), and is cheap at the price, if you haven't had any dinner [since *T* is pronounced the same as *tea*, Jerome is jokingly referring to the meal *afternoon tea*]). It seems to suit everybody, however, which is greatly to its credit.

It suited me to a "T" too, and Harris and I both said it was a good idea of George's; and we said it in a tone that seemed to somehow imply that we were surprised that George should have come out so sensible.

The only one who was not struck with the suggestion was Montmorency. He never did care for the river, did Montmorency.

"It's all very well for you fellows," he says; "you like it, but *I* don't. There's nothing for me to do. Scenery is not in my line, and I don't smoke. If I see a rat, you won't stop; and if I go to sleep, you get fooling about with the boat, and slop [spill] me overboard. If you ask me, I call the whole thing bally [damned] foolishness."

We were three to one, however, and the motion was carried.





Francis Jukes (English, 1745-1812)  
*A View Looking Up the River Thames to Richmond Bridge*, n.d.  
Color aquatint on paper  
The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER II

*Plans discussed.—Pleasures of "camping-out," on fine nights.—Ditto, wet nights.—Compromise decided on.—Montmorency, first impressions of.—Fears lest he is too good for this world, fears subsequently dismissed as groundless.—Meeting adjourns.*

**W**e pulled out the maps, and discussed plans.

We arranged to start on the following Saturday from Kingston[a town in southwest London situated on the Thames, which is why it's referred to often as *Kingston upon Thames*]. Harris and I would go down in the morning, and take the boat up to Chertsey[a town in Surrey, England located 11 miles west of Kingston], and George, who would not be able to get away



from the City[London] till the afternoon (George goes to sleep at a bank from ten to four each day, except Saturdays, when they wake him up and put him outside at two), would meet us there.

Should we "camp out" or sleep at inns?

George and I were for camping out. We said it would be so wild and free, so patriarchal[manly] like.

Slowly the golden memory of the dead sun fades from the hearts of the cold, sad clouds. Silent, like sorrowing children, the birds have ceased their song, and only the moorhen's [female red grouse; a game bird] plaintive [sorrowful] cry and the harsh croak of the corncrake [short-billed bird] stirs the awed hush around the couch of waters, where the dying day breathes out her last.

From the dim woods on either bank, Night's ghostly army, the grey shadows, creep out with noiseless tread to chase away the lingering rear-guard of the light, and pass, with noiseless, unseen feet, above the waving river-grass, and through the sighing rushes; and Night, upon her somber [shadowy] throne, folds her black wings above the darkening world, and, from her phantom palace, lit by the pale stars, reigns in stillness.



Then we run our little boat into some quiet nook, and the tent is pitched, and the frugal supper cooked and eaten. Then the big pipes are filled and lighted, and the pleasant chat goes round in musical undertone; while, in the pauses of our talk, the river, playing round the boat, prattles [utters child's talk] strange old tales and secrets, sings low the old child's song that it has sung so many thousand years—will sing so many thousand years to come, before its voice grows harsh and old—a song that we, who have learnt to love its changing face, who have so often nestled on its yielding bosom, think,

somehow, we understand, though we could not tell you in mere words the story that we listen to.

And we sit there, by its margin, while the moon, who loves it too, stoops down to kiss it with a sister's kiss, and throws her silver arms around it clinging; and we watch it as it flows, ever singing, ever whispering, out to meet its king, the sea—till our voices die away in silence, and the pipes go out—till we, commonplace, everyday young men enough, feel strangely full of thoughts, half sad, half sweet, and do not care or want to speak—till we laugh, and, rising, knock the ashes from our burnt-out pipes, and say "Good-night," and, lulled by the lapping water and the rustling trees, we fall asleep beneath the great, still stars, and dream that the world is young again—young and sweet as she used to be ere[before] the centuries of fret and care had furrowed her fair face, ere her children's sins and follies had made old her loving heart—sweet as she was in those bygone[past] days when, a new-made mother, she nursed us, her children, upon her own deep breast—ere the wiles[trickery] of painted civilization had lured us away from her fond arms, and the poisoned sneers[contemptuous looks] of artificiality[deception] had made us ashamed of the simple life we led with her, and the simple, stately home where mankind was born so many thousands years ago.

Harris said:

"How about when it rained?"

You can never rouse[stir or excite] Harris. There is no poetry about Harris—no wild yearning for the unattainable. Harris never "weeps, he knows not why." If Harris's eyes fill with tears, you can bet it is because Harris has been eating raw onions, or has put too much Worcester[a sauce, occasionally called Worcestershire sauce] over his chop.

If you were to stand at night by the sea-shore with Harris, and say:

"Hark! do you not hear? Is it but the mermaids singing deep below the waving waters; or sad spirits, chanting dirges[funeral songs/tunes expressing mourning in commemoration of the dead] for white corpses, held by seaweed?" Harris would take you by the arm, and say:

"I know what it is, old man; you've got a chill. Now, you come along with me. I know a place round the corner here, where you can get a drop of the finest Scotch whisky you ever tasted—put you right in less than no time."



Harris always does know a place round the corner where you can get something brilliant in the drinking line. I believe that if you met Harris up in Paradise (supposing such a thing likely), he would immediately greet you with:

"So glad you've come, old fellow; I've found a nice place round the corner here, where you can get some really first-class nectar[alcohol]."

In the present instance, however, as regarded the camping out, his practical view of the matter came as a very timely hint. Camping out in rainy weather is not pleasant.

It is evening. You are wet through, and there is a good two inches of water in the boat, and all the things are damp. You find a place on the banks that is not quite so puddly as other places you have seen, and you land and lug out the tent, and two of you proceed to fix it.

It is soaked and heavy, and it flops about, and tumbles down on you, and clings round your head and makes you mad. The rain is pouring steadily down all the time. It is difficult enough to fix a tent in dry weather: in wet, the task becomes herculean[taking tremendous effort; from Hercules, Roman god known for his strength]. Instead of helping you, it seems to you that the other man is simply playing the fool. Just as you get your side beautifully fixed, he gives it a hoist from his end, and spoils it all.

"Here! what are you up to?" you call out.

"What are *you* up to?" he retorts; "leggo[contraction of let go], can't you?"

"Don't pull it; you've got it all wrong, you stupid ass!" you shout.

"No, I haven't," he yells back; "let go your side!"

"I tell you you've got it all wrong!" you roar, wishing that you could get at him; and you give your ropes a lug that pulls all his pegs out.

"Ah, the bally idiot!" you hear him mutter to himself; and then comes a savage haul[a strong pull], and away goes your side. You lay down the mallet and start to go round and tell him what you think about the whole business, and, at the same time, he starts round in the same direction to come and explain his views to you. And you follow each other round and round, swearing at one another, until the tent tumbles down in a heap, and leaves you looking at each other across its ruins, when you both indignantly exclaim, in the same breath:

"There you are! what did I tell you?"

Meanwhile the third man, who has been baling out[clearing water from] the boat, and who has spilled the water down his sleeve, and has been cursing away to himself steadily for the last ten minutes, wants to know what the thundering blazes you're playing at, and why the blarmed[damned] tent isn't up yet.

At last, somehow or other, it does get up, and you land the things[move items from boat to land]. It is hopeless attempting to make a wood fire, so you light the methylated spirit stove[a portable stove that burns denatured alcohol], and crowd round that.

Rainwater is the chief article of diet at supper. The bread is two-thirds rainwater, the beefsteak pie is exceedingly rich[well supplied; coated] in it, and the jam, and the butter, and the salt, and the coffee have all combined with it to make soup.

After supper, you find your tobacco is damp, and you cannot smoke. Luckily you have a bottle of the stuff that cheers and inebriates[makes drunk], if taken in proper quantity, and this restores to you sufficient interest in life to induce[cause] you to go to bed.

There you dream that an elephant has suddenly sat down on your chest, and that the volcano has exploded and thrown you down to the bottom of the sea—the elephant still sleeping peacefully on your bosom. You wake up and grasp the idea that something terrible really has happened. Your first impression is that the end of the world has come; and then you think that this cannot be, and that it is thieves and murderers, or else fire, and this opinion you express in the usual method. No help comes, however, and all you know is that thousands of people are kicking you, and you are being smothered.

Somebody else seems in trouble, too. You can hear his faint cries coming from underneath your bed. Determining, at all events, to sell your life dearly, you struggle frantically, hitting out right and left with arms and legs, and yelling lustily the while, and at last something gives way, and you find your head in the fresh air. Two feet off, you dimly observe a half-dressed ruffian[bully], waiting to kill you, and you are preparing for a life-and-death struggle with him, when it begins to dawn upon you that it's Jim.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he says, recognising you at the same moment.

"Yes," you answer, rubbing your eyes; "what's happened?"

"Bally tent's blown down, I think," he says. "Where's Bill?"

Then you both raise up your voices and shout for "Bill!" and the ground beneath you heaves and rocks, and the muffled voice that you heard before replies from out the ruin:

"Get off my head, can't you?"

And Bill struggles out, a muddy, trampled wreck, and in an unnecessarily aggressive mood—he being under the evident belief that the whole thing has been done on purpose.

In the morning you are all three speechless, owing to having caught severe colds in the night; you also feel very quarrelsome[argumentative], and you swear at each other in hoarse whispers during the whole of breakfast time.

We therefore decided that we would sleep out on fine nights; and hotel it, and inn it, and pub it, like respectable folks, when it was wet, or when we felt inclined for a change.

Montmorency hailed this compromise with much approval. He does not revel[take pleasure] in romantic solitude[seclusion; a lonely place]. Give him something noisy; and if a trifle low, so much the jollier. To look at Montmorency you would imagine that he was an angel sent upon the earth, for some reason withheld from mankind, in the shape of a small fox-terrier. There is a sort of Oh-what-a-wicked-world-this-is-and-how-I-wish-I-could-do-something-to-make-it-better-and-nobler expression about Montmorency that has been known to bring the tears into the eyes of pious[religious] old ladies and gentlemen.

When first he came to live at my expense, I never thought I should be able to get him to stop long. I used to sit down and look

at him, as he sat on the rug and looked up at me, and think: "Oh, that dog will never live. He will be snatched up to the bright skies in a chariot, that is what will happen to him."

But, when I had paid for about a dozen chickens that he had killed; and had dragged him, growling and kicking, by the scruff of his neck, out of a hundred and fourteen street fights; and had had a dead cat brought round for my inspection by an irate female, who called me a murderer; and had been summoned by the man next door but one for having a ferocious dog at large, that had kept him pinned up in his own tool-shed, afraid to venture his nose outside the door for over two hours on a cold night; and had learned that the gardener, unknown to myself, had won thirty shillings by backing him to kill rats against time, then I began to think that maybe they'd let him remain on earth for a bit longer, after all.

To hang about a stable[a shelter for animals, not just horses], and collect a gang of the most disreputable dogs to be found in the town, and lead them out to march round the slums to fight other disreputable dogs, is Montmorency's idea of "life;" and so, as I before observed, he gave to the suggestion of inns, and pubs, and hotels his most emphatic approbation[approval].

Having thus settled the sleeping arrangements to the satisfaction of all four of us, the only thing left to discuss was what we should take with us; and this we had begun to argue, when Harris said he'd had enough oratory[conversation] for one night, and proposed that we should go out and have a smile, saying that he had found a place, round by the square, where you could really get a drop of Irish worth drinking.

George said he felt thirsty (I never knew George when he didn't); and, as I had a presentiment[the feeling that something is about to happen] that a little whisky, warm, with a slice of lemon, would do my complaint good, the debate was, by common assent, adjourned to the following night; and the assembly put on its hats and went out.





Francis Jukes (English, 1745-1812)

*View of Hillbank on the River Thames near London*, published 1795

Color aquatint on paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER III

*Arrangements settled.—Harris's method of doing work.—How the elderly, family-man puts up a picture.—George makes a sensible, remark.—Delights of early morning bathing.—Provisions for getting upset.*

o, on the following evening, we again assembled, to discuss and arrange our plans. Harris said:

"Now, the first thing to settle is what to take with us. Now, you get a bit of paper and write down, J. [Jerome, the author], and you get the grocery catalogue, George, and somebody give me a bit of pencil, and then I'll make out a list."

That's Harris all over—so ready to take the burden of everything himself, and put it on the backs of other people.

He always reminds me of my poor Uncle Podger[the noun podge means a short, chubby person; variation on pudge]. You never saw such a commotion up and down a house, in all your life, as when my Uncle Podger undertook to do a job. A picture would have come home from the frame-maker's, and be standing in the dining-room, waiting to be put up; and Aunt Podger would ask what was to be done with it, and Uncle Podger would say:

"Oh, you leave that to *me*. Don't you, any of you, worry yourselves about that. *I'll* do all that."

And then he would take off his coat, and begin. He would send the girl out for sixpen'orth[sixpence worth] of nails, and then one of the boys after her to tell her what size to get; and, from that, he would gradually work down, and start[disturb; rouse] the whole house.

"Now you go and get me my hammer, Will," he would shout; "and you bring me the rule[ruler], Tom; and I shall want the step-ladder, and I had better have a kitchen-chair, too; and, Jim! you run



round to Mr. Goggles, and tell him, 'Pa's kind regards, and hopes his leg's better; and will he lend him his spirit-level[nowadays, referred to as a level]?' And don't you go, Maria, because I shall want somebody to hold me the light; and when the girl comes back, she must go out again for a bit of picture-cord[wire or string used to hang a picture]; and Tom!—where's Tom?—Tom, you come here; I shall want you to hand me up the picture."

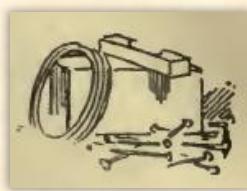
And then he would lift up the picture, and drop it, and it would come out of the frame, and he would try to save the glass, and cut himself; and then he would spring round the room, looking for his handkerchief. He could not find his handkerchief, because it was in the pocket of the coat he had taken off, and he did not know where he had put the coat, and all the house had to leave off looking for his tools, and start looking for his coat; while he would dance round and hinder them.

"Doesn't anybody in the whole house know where my coat is? I never came across such a set in all my life—upon my word I didn't. Six of you!—and you can't find a coat that I put down not five minutes ago! Well, of all the—"

Then he'd get up, and find that he had been sitting on it, and would call out:

"Oh, you can give it up! I've found it myself now. Might just as well ask the cat to find anything as expect you people to find it."

And, when half an hour had been spent in tying up his finger, and a new glass had been got, and the tools, and the ladder, and the chair, and the candle had been brought, he would have another go, the whole family, including the girl and the charwoman[woman hired to clean], standing round in a semicircle, ready to help. Two people would have to hold the chair, and a third would help him up on it,



and hold him there, and a fourth would hand him a nail, and a fifth would pass him up the hammer, and he would take hold of the nail, and drop it.

"There!" he would say, in an injured tone, "now the nail's gone."

And we would all have to go down on our knees and grovel for it, while he would stand on the chair, and grunt, and want to know if he was to be kept there all the evening.

The nail would be found at last, but by that time he would have lost the hammer.

"Where's the hammer? What did I do with the hammer? Great heavens! Seven of you, gaping[staring in amazement with wide open mouth] round there, and you don't know what I did with the hammer!"

We would find the hammer for him, and then he would have lost sight of the mark he had made on the wall, where the nail was to go in, and each of us had to get up on the chair, beside him, and see if we could find it; and we would each discover it in a different place, and he would call us all fools, one after another, and tell us to get down. And he would take the rule, and re-measure, and find that he wanted half thirty-one and three-eighths inches from the corner, and would try to do it in his head, and go mad.

And we would all try to do it in our heads, and all arrive at different results, and sneer at one another. And in the general *row*[commotion; rhymes with *Ow!* (indicating pain), not *Oh!* (indicating surprise)], the original number would be forgotten, and Uncle Podger would have to measure it again.

He would use a bit of string this time, and at the critical moment, when the old fool was leaning over the chair at an angle of forty-five[an angle of 45 degrees], and trying to reach a point three inches beyond what was possible for him to reach, the string would slip, and down he would slide on to the piano, a really fine musical effect being produced by the suddenness with which his head and body struck all the notes at the same time.

And Aunt Maria would say that she would not allow the children to stand round and hear such language.

At last, Uncle Podger would get the spot fixed again, and put the point of the nail on it with his left hand, and take the hammer in his

right hand. And, with the first blow, he would smash his thumb, and drop the hammer, with a yell, on somebody's toes.

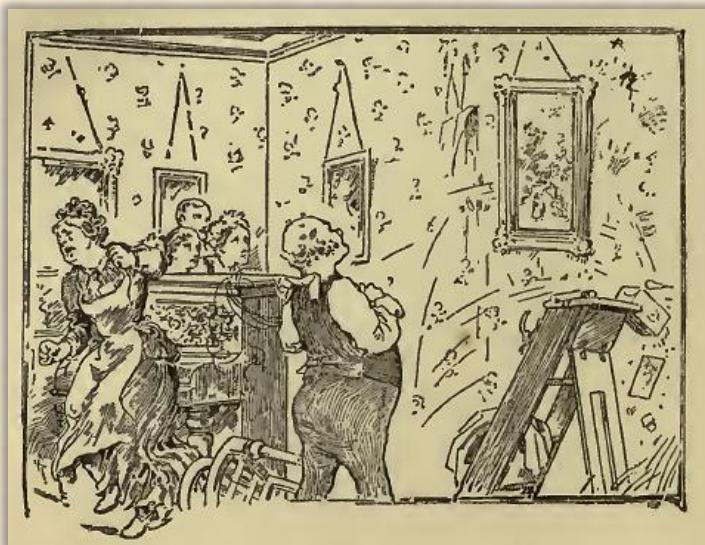
Aunt Maria would mildly observe that, next time Uncle Podger was going to hammer a nail into the wall, she hoped he'd let her know in time, so that she could make arrangements to go and spend a week with her mother while it was being done.

"Oh! you women, you make such a fuss over everything," Uncle Podger would reply, picking himself up. "Why, I *like* doing a little job of this sort."

And then he would have another try, and, at the second blow, the nail would go clean through the plaster, and half the hammer after it, and Uncle Podger be precipitated[thrown] against the wall with force nearly sufficient to flatten his nose.

Then we had to find the rule and the string again, and a new hole was made; and, about midnight, the picture would be up—very crooked and insecure, the wall for yards round looking as if it had been smoothed down with a rake, and everybody dead beat and wretched—except Uncle Podger.

"There you are," he would say, stepping heavily off the chair on to the charwoman's corns[painful calluses, usually on the toes], and surveying the mess he had made with evident pride. "Why, some people would have had a man in to do a little thing like that!"



Harris will be just that sort of man when he grows up, I know, and I told him so. I said I could not permit him to take so much labour[labor] upon himself. I said:

"No; *you* get the paper, and the pencil, and the catalogue, and George write down, and I'll do the work."

The first list we made out had to be discarded. It was clear that the upper reaches of the Thames would not allow of the navigation of a boat sufficiently large to take the things we had set down as indispensable[absolutely necessary]; so we tore the list up, and looked at one another!

George said:

"You know we are on a wrong track altogether. We must not think of the things we could do with, but only of the things that we can't do without."

George comes out really quite sensible at times. You'd be surprised. I call that downright[absolute] wisdom, not merely as regards the present case, but with reference to our trip up the river of life, generally. How many people, on that voyage, load up the boat till it is ever in danger of swamping[sinking] with a store of foolish things which they think essential to the pleasure and comfort of the trip, but which are really only useless lumber[anything cumbersome; think *dead wood*].

How they pile the poor little craft mast-high with fine clothes and big houses; with useless servants, and a host of swell friends that do not care twopence[in this context, *not care a damn*] for them, and that they do not care three ha'pence[half a pence; similar meaning as twopence above] for; with expensive entertainments that nobody enjoys, with formalities and fashions, with pretence[alternate spelling of *pretense* meaning a *false show of something*] and ostentation[overly showy, especially of one's importance or wealth], and with—oh, heaviest, maddest lumber of all!—the dread of what will my neighbour[neighbor] think, with luxuries that only cloy[usually, make weary from excess; in this context, possibly, to clog or choke up], with pleasures that bore, with empty show that, like the criminal's iron crown[medieval torture device tightened around the head to cause bleeding and pain] of yore[ages gone by], makes to bleed and swoon the aching head that wears it!

It is lumber, man—all lumber! Throw it overboard. It makes the boat so heavy to pull, you nearly faint at the oars. It makes it so cumbersome and dangerous to manage, you never know a moment's freedom from anxiety and care, never gain a moment's rest for dreamy laziness—no time to watch the windy shadows skimming lightly o'er[over] the shallows, or the glittering sunbeams flitting in and out among the ripples, or the great trees by the margin looking down at their own image, or the woods all green and golden, or the lilies white and yellow, or the sombre-waving rushes[plants with thin green stems], or the sedges[plants (wholly non-descript)], or the orchis[plants similar to orchids], or the blue forget-me-nots[plants (wholly descript)].

Throw the lumber over, man! Let your boat of life be light, packed with only what you need—a homely[plain] home and simple pleasures, one or two friends, worth the name, someone to love and someone to love you, a cat, a dog, and a pipe or two, enough to eat and enough to wear, and a little more than enough to drink; for thirst is a dangerous thing.

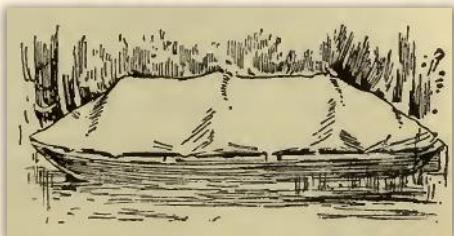
You will find the boat easier to pull then, and it will not be so liable to upset, and it will not matter so much if it does upset; good, plain merchandise will stand water. You will have time to think as well as to work. Time to drink in life's sunshine—time to listen to the *Æolian*[in this context, *produced or carried by the wind*] music that the wind of God draws from the human heart-strings around us—time to—

I beg your pardon, really. I quite forgot.

Well, we left the list to George, and he began it.

"We won't take a tent," suggested George; "we will have a boat with a cover. It is ever so much simpler, and more comfortable."

It seemed a good thought, and we adopted it. I do not know whether you have ever seen the thing I mean. You fix iron hoops up over the boat, and stretch a huge canvas over them, and fasten it down all round, from stem to stern, and it converts the



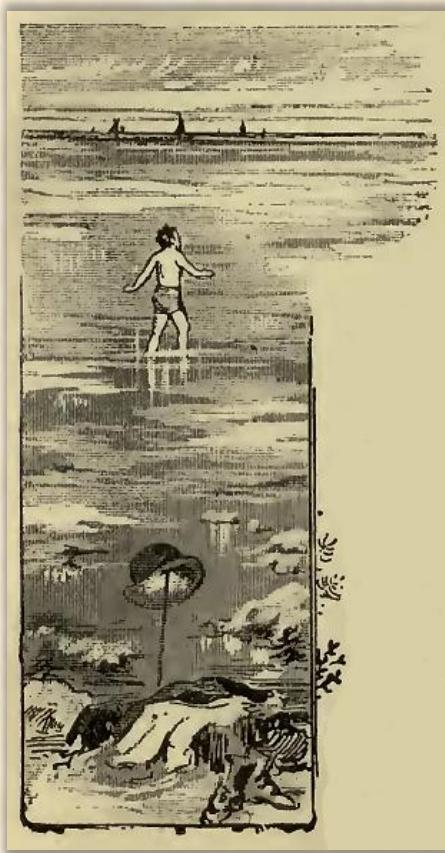
boat into a sort of little house, and it is beautifully cosy[cozy], though a trifle[little bit] stuffy; but there, everything has its drawbacks, as the man said when his mother-in-law died, and they came down upon him for the funeral expenses.

George said that in that case we must take a rug each, a lamp, some soap, a brush and comb (between us), a toothbrush (each), a basin, some tooth-powder[toothpaste historically made from bones, hoofs, and certain animal horns], some shaving tackle (sounds like a French exercise, doesn't it?), and a couple of big towels for bathing. I notice that people always make gigantic arrangements for bathing when they are going anywhere near the water, but that they don't bathe much when they are there.

It is the same when you go to the seaside. I always determine—

when thinking over the matter in London—that I'll get up early every morning, and go and have a dip before breakfast, and I religiously pack up a pair of drawers[early bathing suit or short pants] and a bath towel. I always get red bathing drawers. I rather fancy myself in red drawers. They suit my complexion so. But when I get to the sea I don't feel somehow that I want that early morning bathe nearly so much as I did when I was in town.

On the contrary, I feel more that I want to stop in bed till the last moment, and then come down and have my breakfast. Once or twice virtue has triumphed, and I have got out at six and half-dressed myself, and have taken my



drawers and towel, and stumbled dismally off. But I haven't enjoyed it. They seem to keep a specially cutting[piercing] east wind waiting for me, when I go to bathe in the early morning; and they pick out all the three-cornered stones, and put them on the top, and they sharpen up the rocks and cover the points over with a bit of sand so that I can't see them, and they take the sea and put it two miles out, so that I have to huddle myself up in my arms and hop, shivering, through six inches of water. And when I do get to the sea, it is rough and quite insulting.

One huge wave catches me up and chucks me in a sitting posture, as hard as ever it can, down on to a rock which has been put there for me. And, before I've said "Oh! Ugh!" and found out what has gone, the wave comes back and carries me out to mid-ocean. I begin to strike out frantically for the shore, and wonder if I shall ever see home and friends again, and wish I'd been kinder to my little sister when a boy (when I was a boy, I mean). Just when I have given up all hope, a wave retires and leaves me sprawling like a starfish on the sand, and I get up and look back and find that I've been swimming for my life in two feet of water. I hop back and dress, and crawl home, where I have to pretend I liked it.

In the present instance, we all talked as if we were going to have a long swim every morning.

George said it was so pleasant to wake up in the boat in the fresh morning, and plunge into the limpid[peaceful] river. Harris said there was nothing like a swim before breakfast to give you an appetite. He said it always gave him an appetite. George said that if it was going to make Harris eat more than Harris ordinarily ate, then he should protest against Harris having a bath at all.

He said there would be quite enough hard work in towing sufficient food for Harris up against stream, as it was.

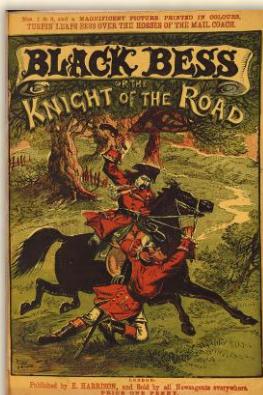
I urged upon George, however, how much pleasanter it would be to have Harris clean and fresh about the boat, even if we did have to take a few more hundredweight[100 pounds/45.3592 kilograms] of provisions[food, etc.]; and he got to see it in my light, and withdrew his opposition to Harris's bath.

Agreed, finally, that we should take *three* bath towels, so as not to keep each other waiting.

For clothes, George said two suits of flannel would be sufficient, as we could wash them ourselves, in the river, when they got dirty. We asked him if he had ever tried washing flannels in the river, and he replied: "No, not exactly himself like; but he knew some fellows who had, and it was easy enough;" and Harris and I were weak enough to fancy he knew what he was talking about, and that three respectable young men, without position or influence, and with no experience in washing, could really clean their own shirts and trousers in the river Thames with a bit of soap.

We were to learn in the days to come, when it was too late, that George was a miserable impostor, who could evidently have known nothing whatever about the matter. If you had seen these clothes after—but, as the shilling shockers [magazines/novels costing one shilling with shocking storylines and less than dainty language; compare with *dime novels* or *penny dreadfuls*] say, we anticipate.

George impressed upon us to take a change of under-things and plenty of socks, in case we got upset and wanted a change; also plenty of handkerchiefs, as they would do to wipe things, and a pair of leather boots as well as our boating shoes, as we should want them if we got upset.



Shilling Shocker





Mr. J. Gale (English, died 1906)

*A Foggy Day on the Thames*, c. 1889, printed October 1889

Photogravure, from "Sun Artists, Number 1" (1889)

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER IV

*The food question.—Objections to paraffine oil as an atmosphere.—Advantages of cheese as a travelling companion.—A married woman deserts her home.—Further provision for getting upset.—I pack.—Cussedness of tooth-brushes.—George and Harris pack.—Awful behaviour of Montmorency.—We retire to rest.*

**T**hen we discussed the food question. George said:

"Begin with breakfast." (George is so practical.) "Now for breakfast we shall want a frying-pan"—(Harris said it was indigestible; but we merely urged him not to be an ass, and George went on)—"a tea-pot and a kettle, and a methylated spirit stove."

"No oil," said George, with a significant look; and Harris and I agreed.

We had taken up an oil-stove once, but "never again." It had been like living in an oil-shop that week. It oozed. I never saw such a thing as paraffine[paraffin; kerosene] oil to ooze. We kept it in the nose of the boat, and, from there, it oozed down to the rudder, impregnating[infusing] the whole boat and everything in it on its way, and it oozed over the river, and saturated the scenery and spoilt the atmosphere. Sometimes a westerly oily wind blew, and at other times an easterly oily wind, and sometimes it blew a northerly oily wind, and maybe a southerly oily wind; but whether it came from the Arctic

snows, or was raised in the waste of the desert sands, it came alike to us laden[loaded] with the fragrance of paraffine oil.

And that oil oozed up and ruined the sunset; and as for the moonbeams, they positively reeked of paraffine.

We tried to get away from it at Marlow[a town located in southern Buckinghamshire county]. We left the boat by the bridge, and took a walk through the town to escape it, but it followed us. The whole town was full of oil. We passed through the churchyard, and it seemed as if the people had been buried in oil. The High Street[focal point of business and shopping] stunk of oil; we wondered how people could live in it. And we walked miles upon miles out Birmingham way; but it was no use, the country was steeped in oil.



At the end of that trip we met together at midnight in a lonely field, under a blasted oak, and took an awful oath (we had been swearing for a whole week about the thing in an ordinary, middle-class way, but this was a swell affair)—an awful oath never to take paraffine oil with us in a boat again—except, of course, in case of sickness[medical-grade paraffine oil is used as a laxative, but it's very different from paraffine oil used as a fuel (i.e., kerosene)].

Therefore, in the present instance, we confined ourselves to methylated spirit. Even that is bad enough. You get methylated pie and methylated cake. But methylated spirit[alcohol] is more wholesome when taken into the system in large quantities than paraffine oil.

For other breakfast things, George suggested eggs and bacon, which were easy to cook, cold meat, tea, bread and butter, and jam. For lunch, he said, we could have biscuits, cold meat, bread and butter, and jam—but *no cheese*. Cheese, like oil, makes too much of itself. It wants the whole boat to itself. It goes through the hamper[large basket usually containing food], and gives a cheesy flavour [flavor] to everything else there. You can't tell whether you are eating apple-pie or German sausage, or strawberries and cream. It all seems cheese. There is too much odour[odor] about cheese.

I remember a friend of mine, buying a couple of cheeses at Liverpool. Splendid cheeses they were, ripe and mellow, and with a two hundred horse-power scent about them that might have been warranted to carry three miles, and knock a man over at two hundred yards. I was in Liverpool[a city located in northwest England in county Merseyside; birthplace of *The Beatles*, a 1960s rock band of note] at the time, and my friend said that if I didn't mind he would get me to take them back with me to London, as he should not be coming up for a day or two himself, and he did not think the cheeses ought to be kept much longer.

"Oh, with pleasure, dear boy," I replied, "with pleasure."

I called for the cheeses, and took them away in a cab. It was a ramshackle[rickety] affair, dragged along by a knock-kneed, broken-winded somnambulist[a person who acts while asleep or unaware; Jerome is referring to the horse], which his owner, in a moment of enthusiasm, during conversation, referred to as a horse[I told you!]. I put the cheeses on the top, and we started off at a shamble[an awkward, unsteady gait] that would have done credit to the swiftest steam-roller ever built, and all went merry as a funeral bell, until we turned the corner. There, the wind carried a whiff from the cheeses full on to our steed. It woke him up, and, with a snort of terror, he dashed off at three miles an hour. The wind still blew in his direction, and before we reached the end of the street he was laying himself out at the rate of nearly four miles an hour, leaving the cripples and stout old ladies simply nowhere.

It took two porters[baggage handlers] as well as the driver to hold him in at the station; and I do not think they would have done it, even then, had not one of the men had the presence of mind to put a handkerchief over his[the horse's] nose, and to light a bit of brown paper.[brown paper soaked in vinegar, an old home remedy to treat wounds, is mentioned in the nursery rhyme *Jack and Jill*.

Jack and Jill went up the hill  
To fetch a pail of water;  
Jack fell down and broke his crown  
And Jill came tumbling after.

Up Jack got and home did trot,  
As fast as he could caper;

Went to bed to mend his head  
With vinegar and brown paper.

Jill came in and she did grin  
To see his paper plaster[bandage];  
Mother, vex'd, did whip her next  
For causing Jack's disaster.

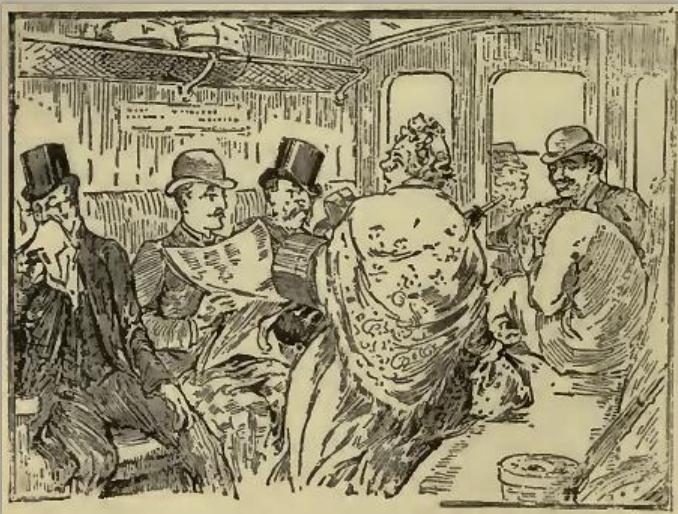
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I took my ticket, and marched proudly up the platform, with my cheeses, the people falling back respectfully on either side. The train was crowded, and I had to get into a carriage where there were already seven other people. One crusty old gentleman objected, but I got in, notwithstanding; and, putting my cheeses upon the rack, squeezed down with a pleasant smile, and said it was a warm day.

A few moments passed, and then the old gentleman began to fidget.

"Very close in here," he said.

"Quite oppressive," said the man next him.



And then they both began sniffing, and, at the third sniff, they caught it right on the chest, and rose up without another word and went out. And then a stout lady got up, and said it was disgraceful that a respectable married woman should be harried[harassed] about in this way, and gathered up a bag and eight parcels and went. The

remaining four passengers sat on for a while, until a solemn-looking man in the corner, who, from his dress and general appearance, seemed to belong to the undertaker class, said it put him in mind of dead baby; and the other three passengers tried to get out of the door at the same time, and hurt themselves.

I smiled at the black gentleman, and said I thought we were going to have the carriage to ourselves; and he laughed pleasantly, and said that some people made such a fuss over a little thing. But even he grew strangely depressed after we had started, and so, when we reached Crewe [a town in Cheshire county, northwest England], I asked him to come and have a drink. He accepted, and we forced our way into the buffet, where we yelled, and stamped, and waved our umbrellas for a quarter of an hour; and then a young lady came, and asked us if we wanted anything.



"What's yours?" I said, turning to my friend.

"I'll have half-a-crown's [one British crown is a fourth of a pound; equivalent to 5 shillings or 60 pence] worth of brandy, neat [undiluted], if you please, miss," he responded.

And he went off quietly after he had drunk it and got into another carriage, which I thought mean.

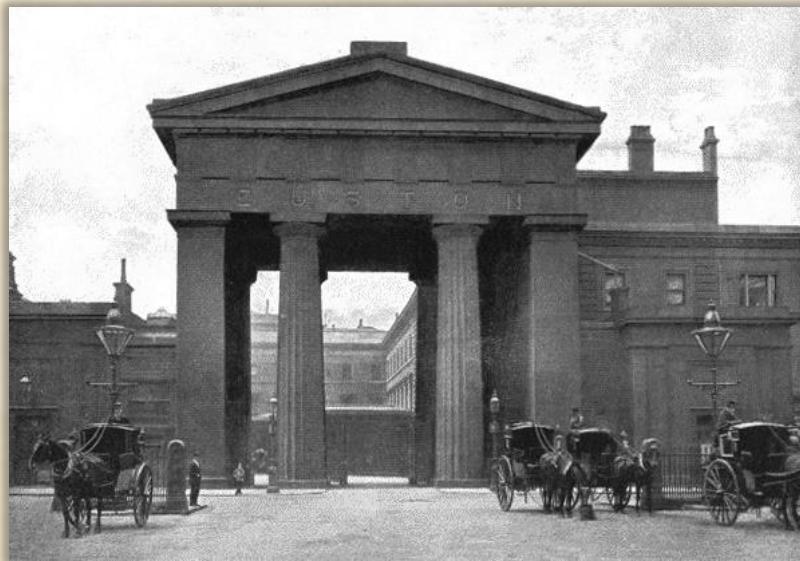
From Crewe I had the compartment to myself, though the train was crowded. As we drew up at the different stations, the people, seeing my empty carriage, would rush for it. "Here y'[you] are, Maria; come along, plenty of room." "All right, Tom; we'll get in here," they would shout. And they would run along, carrying heavy bags, and fight round the door to get in first. And one would open the door and mount the steps, and stagger back into the arms of the man behind him; and they would all come and have a sniff, and then droop off and squeeze into other carriages, or pay the difference and go first [first class].

From Euston [probably referring to the Euston railway station], I took the cheeses down to my friend's house. When his wife came into the room she smelt round for an instant. Then she said:

"What is it? Tell me the worst."

I said:

"It's cheeses. Tom bought them in Liverpool, and asked me to



**Euston Station Arch (1896)**

bring them up with me."

And I added that I hoped she understood that it had nothing to do with me; and she said that she was sure of that, but that she would speak to Tom about it when he came back.

My friend was detained in Liverpool longer than he expected; and, three days later, as he hadn't returned home, his wife called on me. She said:

"What did Tom say about those cheeses?"

I replied that he had directed they were to be kept in a moist place, and that nobody was to touch them.

She said:

"Nobody's likely to touch them. Had he smelt them?"

I thought he had, and added that he seemed greatly attached to them.

"You think he would be upset," she queried, "if I gave a man a sovereign [British coin worth £1] to take them away and bury them?"

I answered that I thought he would never smile again.

An idea struck her. She said:

"Do you mind keeping them for him? Let me send them round to you."



The Great Hall, Euston Station (1905)

"Madam," I replied, "for myself I like the smell of cheese, and the journey the other day with them from Liverpool I shall ever look back upon as a happy ending to a pleasant holiday. But, in this world, we must consider others. The lady under whose roof I have the honour[honor] of residing is a widow, and, for all I know, possibly an orphan too. She has a strong, I may say an eloquent, objection to

being what she terms 'put upon.' The presence of your husband's cheeses in her house she would, I instinctively feel, regard as a 'put upon'; and it shall never be said that I put upon the widow and the orphan."

"Very well, then," said my friend's wife, rising, "all I have to say is, that I shall take the children and go to an hotel until those cheeses are eaten. I decline to live any longer in the same house with them."

She kept her word, leaving the place in charge of the charwoman, who, when asked if she could stand the smell, replied, "What smell?" and who, when taken close to the cheeses and told to sniff hard, said she could detect a faint odour of melons. It was argued from this that little injury could result to the woman from the atmosphere, and she was left.

The hotel bill came to fifteen guineas[a guinea is equivalent to 21 shillings]; and my friend, after reckoning everything up, found that the cheeses had cost him eight-and-sixpence[£8 6d] a pound. He said he dearly loved a bit of cheese, but it was beyond his means; so he determined to get rid of them. He threw them into the canal; but had to fish them out again, as the bargemen complained. They said it made them feel quite faint. And, after that, he took them one dark night and left them in the parish mortuary. But the coroner discovered them, and made a fearful fuss.

He said it was a plot to deprive him of his living by waking up the corpses.

My friend got rid of them, at last, by taking them down to a seaside town, and burying them on the beach. It gained the place quite a reputation. Visitors said they had never noticed before how strong the air was, and weak-chested and consumptive[afflicted with tuberculosis] people used to throng there for years afterwards[many physicians of the time recommended patients with tuberculosis to rest, eat healthy food and exercise outdoors; the first effective antibiotic treatment, streptomycin, was discovered in 1943].

Fond as I am of cheese, therefore, I hold that George was right in declining to take any.

"We shan't[shall not] want any tea," said George (Harris's face fell at this); "but we'll have a good round, square, slap-up[lavish] meal at seven—dinner, tea, and supper combined."

Harris grew more cheerful. George suggested meat and fruit pies, cold meat, tomatoes, fruit, and green stuff. For drink, we took some wonderful sticky concoction[mixture] of Harris's, which you mixed with water and called lemonade, plenty of tea, and a bottle of whisky, in case, as George said, we got upset.

It seemed to me that George harped[to talk about repetitively to the point of being annoying] too much on the getting-upset idea. It seemed to me the wrong spirit to go about the trip in.

But I'm glad we took the whisky.

We didn't take beer or wine. They are a mistake up the river. They make you feel sleepy and heavy. A glass in the evening when you are doing a mouch[walk aimlessly] round the town and looking at the girls is all right enough; but don't drink when the sun is blazing down on your head, and you've got hard work to do.

We made a list of the things to be taken, and a pretty lengthy one it was, before we parted that evening. The next day, which was Friday, we got them all together, and met in the evening to pack. We got a big Gladstone[suitcase named after William Ewart Gladstone, 19<sup>th</sup> century British politician and statesman; usually, Gladstone bag] for the clothes, and a couple of hampers for the victuals[food or provisions; pronounced *vittles*] and the cooking utensils. We moved the table up against the window, piled everything in a heap in the middle of the floor, and sat round and looked at it.

I said I'd pack.

I rather pride myself on my packing. Packing is one of those many things that I feel I know more about than any other person living. (It surprises me myself, sometimes, how many of these subjects there are.) I impressed the fact upon George and Harris, and told them that they had better leave the whole matter entirely to me. They fell into the suggestion with a readiness that had something uncanny about it. George put on a pipe and spread himself over the easy-chair, and Harris cocked his legs on the table and lit a cigar.



Gladstone Bag

This was hardly what I intended. What I had meant, of course, was, that I should boss the job, and that Harris and George should potter[busy oneself] about under my directions, I pushing them aside every now and then with, "Oh, you—!" "Here, let me do it." "There you are, simple enough!"—really teaching them, as you might say. Their taking it in the way they did irritated me. There is nothing does irritate me more than seeing other people sitting about doing nothing when I'm working.

I lived with a man once who used to make me mad that way. He would loll[lounge about] on the sofa and watch me doing things by the hour together, following me round the room with his eyes, wherever I went. He said it did him real good to look on at me, messing about. He said it made him feel that life was not an idle dream to be gaped and yawned through, but a noble task, full of duty and stern work. He said he often wondered now how he could have gone on before he met me, never having anybody to look at while they worked.

Now, I'm not like that. I can't sit still and see another man slaving and working. I want to get up and superintend, and walk round with my hands in my pockets, and tell him what to do. It is my energetic nature. I can't help it.

However, I did not say anything, but started the packing. It seemed a longer job than I had thought it was going to be; but I got the bag finished at last, and I sat on it and strapped it.

"Ain't you going to put the boots in?" said Harris.

And I looked round, and found I had forgotten them. That's just like Harris. He couldn't have said a word until I'd got the bag shut and strapped, of course. And George laughed—one of those irritating, senseless, chuckle-headed, crack-jawed laughs of his. They do make me so wild.

I opened the bag and packed the boots in; and then, just as I was going to close it, a horrible idea occurred to me. Had I packed my tooth-brush? I don't know how it is, but I never do know whether I've packed my tooth-brush.

My tooth-brush is a thing that haunts me when I'm travelling, and makes my life a misery. I dream that I haven't packed it, and wake up in a cold perspiration, and get out of bed and hunt for it. And, in the morning, I pack it before I have used it, and have to unpack again to get it, and it is always the last thing I turn out of the bag; and then I repack and forget it, and have to rush upstairs for it at the last

moment and carry it to the railway station, wrapped up in my pocket-handkerchief.

Of course I had to turn every mortal thing out now, and, of course, I could not find it. I rummaged the things up into much the same state that they must have been before the world was created, and when chaos reigned. Of course, I found George's and Harris's eighteen times over, but I couldn't find my own. I put the things back one by one, and held everything up and shook it. Then I found it inside a boot. I repacked once more.



When I had finished, George asked if the soap was in. I said I didn't care a hang[damn] whether the soap was in or whether it wasn't; and I slammed the bag to and strapped it, and found that I had packed my tobacco pouch in it, and had to re-open it. It got shut up finally at 10.05 P.M., and then there remained the hampers to do. Harris said that we should be wanting to start in less than twelve hours' time, and thought that he and George had better do the rest; and I agreed and sat down, and they had a go.

They began in a light-hearted spirit, evidently intending to show me how to do it. I made no comment; I only waited. When George is hanged, Harris will be the worst packer in this world; and I looked at the piles of plates and cups, and kettles, and bottles and jars, and pies, and stoves, and cakes, and tomatoes, etc., and felt that the thing would soon become exciting.

It did. They started with breaking a cup. That was the first thing they did. They did that just to show you what they *could* do, and to get you interested.

Then Harris packed the strawberry jam on top of a tomato and squashed it, and they had to pick out the tomato with a teaspoon.

And then it was George's turn, and he trod[stepped] on the butter. I didn't say anything, but I came over and sat on the edge of the table and watched them. It irritated them more than anything I could have said. I felt that. It made them nervous and excited, and they stepped on things, and put things behind them, and then couldn't find them when they wanted them; and they packed the pies at the bottom, and put heavy things on top, and smashed the pies in.

They upset salt over everything, and as for the butter! I never saw two men do more with one-and-twopence worth of butter in my whole life than they did. After George had got it off his slipper, they tried to put it in the kettle. It wouldn't go in, and what *was* in wouldn't come out. They did scrape it out at last, and put it down on a chair, and Harris sat on it, and it stuck to him, and they went looking for it all over the room.

"I'll take my oath[*to take an oath* means *to swear*] I put it down on that chair," said George, staring at the empty seat.

"I saw you do it myself, not a minute ago," said Harris.

Then they started round the room again looking for it; and then they met again in the centre[center], and stared at one another.

"Most extraordinary thing I ever heard of," said George.

"So mysterious!" said Harris.

Then George got round at the back of Harris and saw it.

"Why, here it is all the time," he exclaimed, indignantly.

"Where?" cried Harris, spinning round.

"Stand still, can't you!" roared George, flying after him.

And they got it off, and packed it in the teapot.

Montmorency was in it all, of course. Montmorency's ambition in life is to get in the way and be sworn at. If he can squirm in anywhere where he particularly is not wanted, and be a perfect nuisance, and make people mad, and have things thrown at his head, then he feels his day has not been wasted.

To get somebody to stumble over him, and curse him steadily for an hour, is his highest aim and object; and, when he has succeeded in accomplishing this, his conceit[*over-estimation of oneself*] becomes quite unbearable.

He came and sat down on things, just when they were wanted to be packed; and he laboured[*labored*] under the fixed belief that, whenever Harris or George reached out their hand for anything, it was his cold, damp nose that they wanted. He put his leg into the jam, and he worried[*disturbed*] the teaspoons, and he pretended that the lemons were rats, and got into the hamper and killed three of them before Harris could land him with the frying-pan.

Harris said I encouraged him. I didn't encourage him. A dog like that don't want[~~lack~~; need] any encouragement. It's the natural, original sin that is born in him that makes him do things like that.

The packing was done at 12.50; and Harris sat on the big hamper, and said he hoped nothing would be found broken. George said that if anything was broken it *was* broken, which reflection seemed to comfort him. He also said he was ready for bed. We were all ready for bed. Harris was to sleep with us that night, and we went upstairs.

We tossed[flipped a coin] for beds, and Harris had to sleep with me. He said:

"Do you prefer the inside or the outside, J.?"

I said I generally preferred to sleep *inside* a bed.

Harris said it was old.

George said:

"What time shall I wake you fellows?"

Harris said:

"Seven."

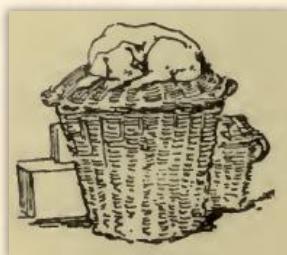
I said:

"No—six," because I wanted to write some letters.

Harris and I had a bit of a row over it, but at last split the difference, and said half-past six.

"Wake us at 6.30, George," we said.

George made no answer, and we found, on going over, that he had been asleep for some time; so we placed the bath where he could tumble into it on getting out in the morning, and went to bed ourselves.





Joseph Pennell (American, 1857-1926)

*Mist on the Thames*, 1903

Aquatint on grey laid paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER V

*Mrs. P. arouses us.—George, the sluggard.—The "weather forecast" swindle.—Our luggage.—Depravity of the small boy.—The people gather round us.—We drive off in great style, and arrive at Waterloo.—Innocence of South Western Officials concerning such worldly things as trains.—We are afloat, afloat in an open boat.*

 t was Mrs. Poppets that woke me up next morning.

She said:

"Do you know that it's nearly nine o'clock, sir?"

"Nine o' what?" I cried, starting up.

"Nine o'clock," she replied, through the keyhole. "I thought you was a-oversleeping yourselves."

I woke Harris, and told him. He said:

"I thought you wanted to get up at six?"

"So I did," I answered; "why didn't you wake me?"



"How could I wake you, when you didn't wake me?" he retorted. "Now we shan't get on the water till after twelve. I wonder you take the trouble to get up at all."

"Um," I replied, "lucky for you that I do. If I hadn't woke you, you'd have lain there for the whole fortnight."

We snarled at one another in this strain for the next few minutes,



and his knees stuck up.

I don't know why it should be, I am sure; but the sight of another man asleep in bed when I am up, maddens me. It seems to me so shocking to see the precious hours of a man's life—the priceless moments that will never come back to him again—being wasted in mere brutish[animal-like] sleep.

There was George, throwing away in hideous sloth the inestimable gift of time; his valuable life, every second of which he would have to account for hereafter, passing away from him, unused. He might have been up stuffing himself with eggs and bacon, irritating the dog, or flirting with the slavey[female servant], instead of sprawling there, sunk in soul-clogging oblivion.

It was a terrible thought. Harris and I appeared to be struck by it at the same instant. We determined to save him, and, in this noble resolve, our own dispute was forgotten. We flew across and slung the clothes off him, and Harris landed him one with a slipper, and I shouted in his ear, and he awoke.

"Wasermarrer[semi-conscious *What's the matter?*?]" he observed, sitting up.

"Get up, you fat-headed chunk[plank]!" roared Harris. "It's quarter to ten."

"What!" he shrieked, jumping out of bed into the bath; "Who the thunder put this thing here?"

We told him he must have been a fool not to see the bath.

when we were interrupted by a defiant snore from George. It reminded us, for the first time since our being called, of his existence. There he lay—the man who had wanted to know what time he should wake us—on his back, with his mouth wide open,

We finished dressing, and, when it came to the extras, we remembered that we had packed the tooth-brushes and the brush and comb (that tooth-brush of mine will be the death of me, I know), and we had to go downstairs, and fish them out of the bag. And when we had done that George wanted the shaving tackle. We told him that he would have to go without shaving that morning, as we weren't going to unpack that bag again for him, nor for anyone like him.

He said:

"Don't be absurd. How can I go into the City like this?"

It was certainly rather rough on the City, but what cared we for human suffering? As Harris said, in his common, vulgar way, the City would have to lump it.

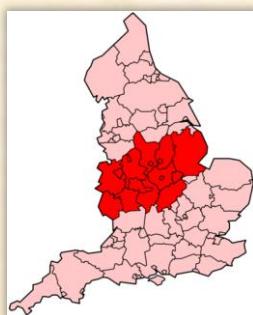
We went downstairs to breakfast. Montmorency had invited two other dogs to come and see him off, and they were whiling away the time by fighting on the doorstep. We calmed them with an umbrella, and sat down to chops and cold beef.

Harris said:

"The great thing is to make a good breakfast," and he started with a couple of chops, saying that he would take these while they were hot, as the beef could wait.

George got hold of the paper, and read us out the boating fatalities, and the weather forecast, which latter prophesied "rain, cold, wet to fine" (whatever more than usually ghastly thing in weather that may be), "occasional local thunderstorms, east wind, with general depression over the Midland Counties (London and Channel). Bar.[barometer] fal-ling."

I do think that, of all the silly, irritating tomfoolishness[silliness] by which we are plagued, this "weather-forecast" fraud is about the most aggravating. It "forecasts" precisely what happened yesterday or the



Midland Counties

day before, and precisely the opposite of what is going to happen to-day.

I remember a holiday of mine being completely ruined one late autumn by our paying attention to the weather report of the local newspaper. "Heavy showers, with thunderstorms, may be expected to-day," it would say on Monday, and so we would give up our picnic, and stop[stay] indoors all day, waiting for the rain.—And people would pass the house, going off in wagonettes[an open-air horse-drawn cart with two facing seats] and coaches[a horse-drawn enclosed carriage] as jolly and merry as could be, the sun shining out, and not a cloud to be seen.

"Ah!" we said, as we stood looking out at them through the window, "won't they come home soaked!"

And we chuckled to think how wet they were going to get, and came back and stirred the fire, and got our books, and arranged our specimens of seaweed and cockle shells. By twelve o'clock, with the sun pouring into the room, the heat became quite oppressive, and we wondered when those heavy showers and occasional thunderstorms were going to begin.

"Ah! they'll come in the afternoon, you'll find," we said to each other. "Oh, *won't* those people get wet. What a lark![How amusing!]"

At one o'clock, the landlady would come in to ask if we weren't going out, as it seemed such a lovely day.

"No, no," we replied, with a knowing chuckle, "not we. *We* don't mean to get wet—no, no."

And when the afternoon was nearly gone, and still there was no sign of rain, we tried to cheer ourselves up with the idea that it would come down all at once, just as the people had started for home, and were out of the reach of any shelter, and that they would thus get more drenched than ever. But not a drop ever fell, and it finished a grand day, and a lovely night after it.

The next morning we would read that it was going to be a "warm, fine to set-fair[an indication on a barometer's scale between fair and very dry] day; much heat;" and we would dress ourselves in flimsy things, and go out, and, half-an-hour after we had



Barometer

started, it would commence to rain hard, and a bitterly cold wind would spring up, and both would keep on steadily for the whole day, and we would come home with colds and rheumatism[pain] all over us, and go to bed.

The weather is a thing that is beyond me altogether. I never can understand it. The barometer is useless: it is as misleading as the newspaper forecast.

There was one hanging up in a hotel at Oxford[city northwest of London; home of Oxford University] at which I was staying last spring, and, when I got there, it was pointing to "set fair." It was simply pouring with rain outside, and had been all day; and I couldn't quite make matters out. I tapped the barometer, and it jumped up and pointed to "very dry." The Boots[a person who cleans shoes and boots in a hotel] stopped as he was passing, and said he expected it meant to-morrow. I fancied that maybe it was thinking of the week before last, but Boots said, No, he thought not.



I tapped it again the next morning, and it went up still higher, and the rain came down faster than ever. On Wednesday I went and hit it again, and the pointer went round towards "set fair," "very dry," and "much heat," until it was stopped by the peg, and couldn't go any further. It tried its best, but the instrument was built so that it couldn't prophesy fine weather any harder than it did without breaking itself. It evidently wanted to go on, and prognosticate[predict] drought, and water famine, and sunstroke, and simooms[strong, hot, dry, dust-laden winds], and such things, but the peg prevented it, and it had to be content with pointing to the mere commonplace "very dry."

Meanwhile, the rain came down in a steady torrent[violent downpour], and the lower part of the town was under water, owing to the river having overflowed.

Boots said it was evident that we were going to have a prolonged spell of grand weather *some time*, and read out a poem which was printed over the top of the oracle, about

"Long foretold, long last;  
Short notice, soon past."

The fine weather never came that summer. I expect that machine must have been referring to the following spring.

Then there are those new style of barometers, the long straight ones. I never can make head or tail of those. There is one side for 10 A.M. yesterday, and one side for 10 A.M. to-day; but you can't always get there as early as ten, you know. It rises or falls for rain and fine, with much or less wind, and one end is "Nly[abbreviation for northerly]" and the other "Ely[easterly]" (what's Ely got to do with it? [Ely(pronounced ee-lee) is a city 80 miles north of London; J. is confusing the abbreviation for easterly(Ely) with the city]), and if you tap it, it doesn't tell you anything. And you've got to correct it to sea-level, and reduce it to Fahrenheit, and even then I don't know the answer.

But who wants to be foretold the weather? It is bad enough when it comes, without our having the misery of knowing about it beforehand. The prophet we like is the old man who, on the particularly gloomy-looking morning of some day when we particularly want it to be fine, looks round the horizon with a particularly knowing eye, and says:

"Oh no, sir, I think it will clear up all right. It will break all right enough, sir."

"Ah, he knows", we say, as we wish him good-morning, and start off; "wonderful how these old fellows can tell!"

And we feel an affection for that man which is not at all lessened by the circumstances of its *not* clearing up, but continuing to rain steadily all day.

"Ah, well," we feel, "he did his best."

For the man that prophesies us bad weather, on the contrary, we entertain only bitter and revengeful thoughts.

"Going to clear up, d'ye[do you] think?" we shout, cheerily, as we pass.



"Well, no, sir; I'm afraid it's settled down for the day," he replies, shaking his head.

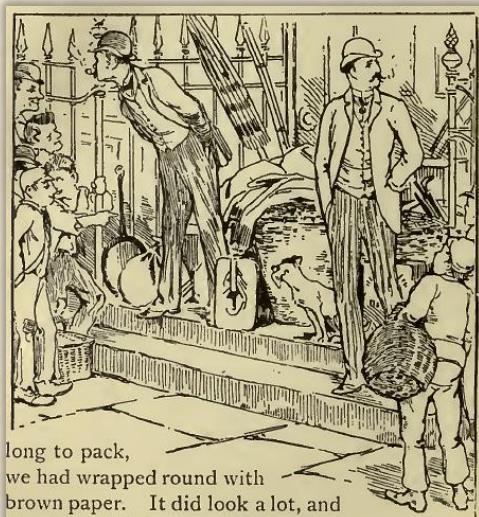
"Stupid old fool!" we mutter, "what's *he* know about it?" And, if his portent[omen] proves correct, we come back feeling still more angry against him, and with a vague notion that, somehow or other, he has had something to do with it.

It was too bright and sunny on this especial morning for George's blood-curdling readings about "Bar. falling," "atmospheric disturbance, passing in an oblique line over Southern Europe," and "pressure increasing," to very much upset us: and so, finding that he could not make us wretched[miserable], and was only wasting his time, he sneaked the cigarette that I had carefully rolled up for myself, and went.

Then Harris and I, having finished up the few things left on the table, carted out our luggage on to the doorstep, and waited for a cab.

There seemed a good deal of luggage, when we put it all together. There was the Gladstone and the small hand-bag, and the two hampers, and a large roll of rugs, and some four or five overcoats and macintoshes[raincoats], and a few umbrellas, and then there was a melon by itself in a bag, because it was too bulky to go in anywhere, and a couple of pounds of grapes in another bag, and a Japanese paper umbrella, and a frying pan, which, being too long to pack, we had wrapped round with brown paper. It did look a lot, and Harris and I began to feel rather ashamed of it, though why we should be, I can't see. No cab came by, but the street boys did, and got interested in the show, apparently, and stopped.

Biggs's boy was the first to come round.



long to pack,  
we had wrapped round with  
brown paper. It did look a lot, and

Biggs is our green-grocer, and his chief talent lies in securing the services of the most abandoned and unprincipled errand-boys that civilisation[civilization] has as yet produced. If anything more than usually villainous in the boy-line crops up in our neighbourhood [neighborhood], we know that it is Biggs's latest. I was told that, at the time of the Great Coram Street murder[1872 murder of Harriet Buswell at No. 12 Great Coram Street; see [www.victorianlondon.org/crime/greatcoramstreet.htm](http://www.victorianlondon.org/crime/greatcoramstreet.htm) for more detail], it was promptly concluded by our street that Biggs's boy (for that period) was at the bottom of it[in other words, they believed he was responsible], and had he not been able, in reply to the severe cross-examination to which he was subjected by No. 19[the residents of house number 19], when he called there for orders the morning after the crime (assisted by No. 21[the residents of house number 21], who happened to be on the step at the time), to prove a complete *alibi*, it would have gone hard with him. I didn't know Biggs's boy at that time, but, from what I have seen of them since, I should not have attached much importance to that *alibi* myself.

Biggs's boy, as I have said, came round the corner. He was evidently in a great hurry when he first dawned upon the vision, but, on catching sight of Harris and me, and Montmorency, and the things, he eased up and stared. Harris and I frowned at him. This might have wounded a more sensitive nature, but Biggs's boys are not, as a rule, touchy[oversensitive]. He came to a dead stop, a yard from our step, and, leaning up against the railings, and selecting a straw to chew, fixed us with his eye. He evidently meant to see this thing out.

In another moment, the grocer's boy passed on the opposite side of the street. Biggs's boy hailed him:

"Hi! ground floor o' 42's a-moving."

The grocer's boy came across, and took up a position on the other side of the step. Then the young gentleman from the boot-shop stopped, and joined Biggs's boy; while the empty-can superintendent from "The Blue Posts"[a pub] took up an independent position on the curb.

"They ain't a-going to starve, are they?" said the gentleman from the boot-shop.

"Ah! you'd want to take a thing or two with *you*," retorted "The Blue Posts," "if you was a-going to cross the Atlantic in a small boat."

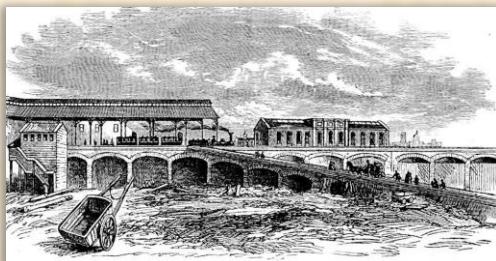
"They ain't a-going to cross the Atlantic," struck in Biggs's boy; "they're a-going to find Stanley." [Stanley refers to the explorer Henry Morton Stanley who found the missing explorer David Livingstone in Tanzania. Stanley began his search in 1869, but didn't find Livingstone until 1871 ("Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"), prompting this humorous comment from Biggs's boy.]

By this time, quite a small crowd had collected, and people were asking each other what was the matter. One party (the young and giddy portion of the crowd) held that it was a wedding, and pointed out Harris as the bridegroom; while the elder and more thoughtful among the populace inclined to the idea that it was a funeral, and that I was probably the corpse's brother.

At last, an empty cab turned up (it is a street where, as a rule, and when they are not wanted, empty cabs pass at the rate of three a minute, and hang about, and get in your way), and packing ourselves and our belongings into it, and shooting[shooing] out a couple of Montmorency's friends, who had evidently sworn never to forsake him, we drove away amidst the cheers of the crowd, Biggs's boy shying[throwing] a carrot after us for luck.

We got to Waterloo[Waterloo Station, or London Waterloo, is the central London terminus on the National Rail network in the United Kingdom] at eleven, and asked where the eleven-fifteen[a specific train departing at 11:05] started from. Of course nobody knew; nobody at Waterloo ever does know where a train is going to start from, or where a train when it does start is going to, or anything about it. The porter who took our things thought it would go from number two platform, while another porter, with whom he discussed the question, had heard a rumour[rumor] that it would go from number one. The station-master, on the other hand, was convinced it would start from the local[a train that usually stops at all stations].

To put an end to the matter, we went upstairs, and asked the traffic superintendent, and he told us that he had just met a man, who said he had seen it at number three platform. We went to



Waterloo Station (1848)

number three platform, but the authorities there said that they rather thought that train was the Southampton express, or else the Windsor loop. But they were sure it wasn't the Kingston train, though why they were sure it wasn't they couldn't say.

Then our porter said he thought that must be it on the high-level platform; said he thought he knew the train. So we went to the high-level platform, and saw the engine-driver, and asked him if he was going to Kingston. He said he couldn't say for certain of course, but that he rather thought he was. Anyhow, if he wasn't

the 11:05 for Kingston, he said he was pretty confident he was the 9:32 for Virginia Water, or the 10 A.M. express for the Isle of Wight,

or somewhere in that direction, and we should all know when we got there. We slipped half-a-crown into his hand, and begged him to be the 11:05 for Kingston.

"Nobody will ever know, on this line," we said, "what you are, or where you're going. You know the way, you

slip off quietly and go to Kingston."

"Well, I don't know, gents," replied the noble fellow, "but I suppose *some* train's got to go to Kingston; and I'll do it. Gimme[Give me] the half-crown."

Thus we got to Kingston by the London and Southwestern Railway.

We learnt, afterwards, that the train we had come by was really the Exeter mail, and that they had spent hours at Waterloo, looking for it, and nobody knew what had become of it.



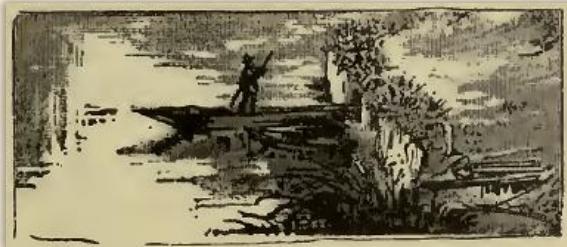
Waterloo Station (2013)



Our boat was waiting for us at Kingston just below bridge, and to it we wended our way, and round it we stored our luggage, and into it we stepped.

"Are you all right, sir?" said the man.

"Right it is," we answered; and with Harris at the sculls[oars] and I at the tiller-lines[used to control the rudder], and Montmorency, unhappy and deeply suspicious, in the prow[bow or front of the boat], out we shot on to the waters which, for a fortnight, were to be our home.





Theodore Roussel (French, worked in England, 1847-1926)

*The Thames, Evening*, 1897

Etching and drypoint in black, with plate tone, on cream laid paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER VI

*Kingston.—Instructive remarks on early English history.—Instructive observations on carved oak and life in general.—Sad case of Stirrings, junior.—Musings on antiquity.—I forget that I am steering.—Interesting result.—Hampton Court Maze.—Harris as a guide.*

 It was a glorious morning, late spring or early summer, as you care to take it, when the dainty sheen of grass and leaf is blushing to a deeper green; and the year seems like a fair young maid, trembling with strange, wakening pulses on the brink of womanhood.

The quaint back streets of Kingston, where they came down to the water's edge, looked quite picturesque in the flashing sunlight, the glinting river with its drifting barges, the wooded towpath, the trim-kept villas on the other side, Harris, in a red and orange blazer, grunting away at the sculls, the distant glimpses of the grey old palace of the Tudors, all made a sunny picture, so bright but calm, so full of life, and yet so peaceful, that, early in the day though it was, I felt myself being dreamily lulled off into a musing fit.

I mused on Kingston, or "Kyningestun," as it was once called in the days when Saxon "kinges" were crowned there. Great Cæsar crossed the river there, and the Roman legions camped upon its sloping uplands. Cæsar, like, in later years, Elizabeth, seems to have stopped everywhere: only he was more respectable than good Queen Bess[Queen Elizabeth I]; he didn't put up at the public-houses[pubs].

She was nuts on public-houses, was England's Virgin Queen

[Queen Elizabeth I].

There's scarcely a pub of any attractions within ten miles of London that she does not seem to have



Kingston Church (1897 and 2012)

looked in at, or stopped at, or slept at, some time or other. I wonder now, supposing Harris, say, turned over a new leaf, and became a great and good man, and got to be Prime Minister, and died, if they would put up signs over the public-houses that he had patronised [patronized; to act as a patron; to support]: "Harris had a glass of bitter [bitter tasting beer] in this house;" "Harris had two of Scotch cold here in the summer of '88;" "Harris was chucked from here in December, 1886."

No, there would be too many of them! It would be the houses that he had never entered that would become famous. "Only house in South London that Harris never had a drink in!" The people would flock to it to see what could have been the matter with it.

How poor weak-minded King Edwy [king of England from 23 November 955 to 1 October 959; crowned king at age 15; died from unknown circumstances around age 20; generally considered a lascivious little twerp; also known as Eadwig and Eadwig All-Fair] must have hated Kyningestun! The coronation feast had been too much for him. Maybe boar's head stuffed with sugar-plums did not agree with him (it wouldn't with me, I



King Edwy

know), and he had had enough of sack[dry Spanish wine] and mead[honey and water fermented and flavored]; so he slipped from the noisy revel to steal a quiet moonlight hour with his beloved Elgiva[Edwy's wife; also known as *Ælfgifu* of Shaftesbury; canonized Saint Elgiva].

Perhaps, from the casement[frame of a window], standing hand-in-hand, they were watching the calm moonlight on the river, while from the distant halls the boisterous revelry floated in broken bursts of faint-heard din and tumult.

Then brutal Odo[Archbishop of Canterbury from 941 until his death in 958; also known as Oda; occasionally called *The Good* or *The Severe* (which opens a very large window for behavior)] and St. Dunstan [Archbishop of Canterbury from 959 to 988; Edwy and Dunstan had, let's say, a rocky relationship] force their rude way into the quiet room, and hurl coarse insults at the sweet-faced Queen, and drag poor Edwy back to the loud clamour[clamor] of the drunken brawl.

Years later, to the crash of battle-music, Saxon kings and Saxon



Great Gate at Hampton Court Palace

revelry were buried side by side, and Kingston's greatness passed away for a time, to rise once more when Hampton Court became the palace of the Tudors and the Stuarts, and the royal barges strained at their moorings on the river's bank,

and bright-cloaked gallants [fashionable men] swaggered down the water-steps[staggered steps of rock with water cascading over them] to cry: "What Ferry[in this context, a place of passage across a body of water], ho! Gadzooks[a mild oath],

gramercy[French for *grand-merci* or *many*

*thanks*]."

Many of the old houses, round about, speak very plainly of those days when Kingston was a royal borough, and nobles and courtiers lived there, near their King, and the long road to the palace gates was gay[lively] all day with clanking steel and prancing palfreys[small horses for ladies], and rustling silks and velvets, and fair faces. The large and spacious houses, with their oriel[a window that juts out to form a small apartment], latticed windows, their huge fireplaces, and their gabled roofs, breathe of the days of hose[stockings] and doublet[a tight-fitting garment, such as a jacket with or without sleeves], of pearl-embroidered

stomachers[an ornament or support for the stomach or breast, worn by women; usually made from stiff fabric cut in a V-shape], and complicated oaths[a solemn statement with an appeal to God as witness; for example, *I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.*]. They were upraised in the days "when men knew how to build." The hard red bricks have only grown more firmly set with time, and their oak stairs do not creak and grunt when you try to go down them quietly.

Speaking of oak staircases reminds me that there is a magnificent carved oak staircase in one of the houses in Kingston. It is a shop now, in the market-place, but it was evidently once the mansion of some great personage. A friend of mine, who lives at Kingston, went in there to buy a hat one day, and, in a thoughtless moment, put his hand in his pocket and paid for it then and there.

The shopman (he knows my friend) was naturally a little staggered at first; but, quickly recovering himself, and feeling that something ought to be done to encourage this sort of thing, asked our hero if he would like to see some fine old carved oak. My friend said he would, and the shopman, thereupon, took him through the shop, and up the staircase of the house. The balusters[small pillars used to support staircase railings] were a superb piece of workmanship, and the wall all the way up was oak-paneled, with carving that would have done credit to a palace.

From the stairs, they went into the drawing-room, which was a large, bright room, decorated with a somewhat startling though cheerful paper of a blue ground[tint]. There was nothing, however, remarkable about the apartment, and my friend wondered why he had been brought there. The proprietor went up to the paper, and tapped it. It gave forth a wooden sound.

"Oak," he explained. "All carved oak, right up to the ceiling, just the same as you saw on the staircase."

"But, great Cæsar! man," expostulated[to protest in a friendly manner] my friend; "you don't mean to say you have covered over carved oak with blue wall-paper?"



Oriel (16<sup>th</sup> Century)

"Yes," was the reply: "it was expensive work. Had to match-board[cover with wooden slats] it all over first, of course. But the room looks cheerful now. It was awful gloomy before."

I can't say I altogether blame the man (which is doubtless a great relief to his mind). From his point of view, which would be that of the average householder, desiring to take life as lightly as possible, and not that of the old-curiosity-shop maniac, there is reason on his side. Carved oak is very pleasant to look at, and to have a little of, but it is no doubt somewhat depressing to live in, for those whose fancy does not lie that way. It would be like living in a church.

No, what was sad in his case was that he, who didn't care for carved oak, should have his drawing-room paneled with it, while people who do care for it have to pay enormous prices to get it. It seems to be the rule of this world. Each person has what he doesn't want, and other people have what he does want.

Married men have wives, and don't seem to want them; and young single fellows cry out that they can't get them. Poor people who can hardly keep themselves have eight hearty children. Rich old couples, with no one to leave their money to, die childless.

Then there are girls with lovers. The girls that have lovers never want them. They say they would rather be without them, that they bother them, and why don't they go and make love to Miss Smith and Miss Brown, who are plain and elderly, and haven't got any lovers? They themselves don't want lovers. They never mean to marry.

It does not do to dwell on these things; it makes one so sad.

There was a boy at our school, we used to call him Sandford and Merton[Taken from the title of Thomas Day's book *The History of Sandford and Merton* containing children's stories portraying good morals. From Wikipedia: It was as a writer for children that Day made his reputation. *The History of Little Jack* (1787) was extremely popular, but it could not match the sales of *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1783, 1786, 1789) which was a bestseller for over a hundred years. Embracing Rousseau's dictates in many ways, it narrates the story of the rich, noble but spoiled Tommy Merton and his poor but virtuous friend Harry Sandford. Through trials and stories, Harry and the boys' tutor teach Tommy the importance of labor and the evils of the idle rich. One brief story appears in Appendix B.]. His real name was Stivvings. He was the most extraordinary lad I ever came across. I believe he really liked study. He used to get into awful rows for sitting up in bed and reading Greek; and as for French irregular

verbs there was simply no keeping him away from them. He was full of weird and unnatural notions about being a credit to his parents and an honour[honor] to the school; and he yearned to win prizes, and grow up and be a clever man, and had all those sorts of weak-minded ideas. I never knew such a strange creature, yet harmless, mind you, as the babe unborn.

Well, that boy used to get ill about twice a week, so that he couldn't go to school. There never was such a boy to get ill as that Sandford and Merton. If there was any known disease going within ten miles of him, he had it, and had it badly. He would take bronchitis in the dog-days[*end of July to the beginning of September*], and have hay-fever at Christmas. After a six weeks' period of drought, he would be stricken down with rheumatic fever[*an inflammatory disease that can involve the heart, joints, skin, and brain; typically develops two to four weeks after a streptococcal throat infection*]; and he would go out in a November fog and come home with a sunstroke.

They put him under laughing gas[*nitrous oxide; used as an anesthetic*] one year, poor lad, and drew all his teeth, and gave him a false set, because he suffered so terribly with toothache; and then it turned to neuralgia[*pain caused by nerve damage*] and ear-ache. He was never without a cold, except once for nine weeks while he had scarlet fever; and he always had chilblains[*sores on hands or feet caused by a chill*]. During the great cholera scare of 1871, our neighbourhood was singularly free from it. There was only one reputed case in the whole parish[*a district under one pastor*]: that case was young Stivvings.

He had to stop in bed when he was ill, and eat chicken and custards and hot-house grapes; and he would lie there and sob, because they wouldn't let him do Latin exercises, and took his German grammar away from him.

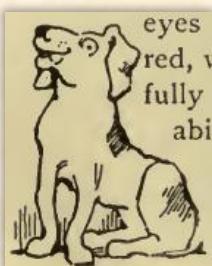
And we other boys, who would have sacrificed ten terms of our school-life for the sake of being ill for a day, and had no desire whatever to give our parents any excuse for being stuck-up about us, couldn't catch so much as a stiff neck. We fooled about in draughts, and it did us good, and freshened us up; and we took things to make us sick, and they made us fat, and gave us an appetite. Nothing we could think of seemed to make us ill until the holidays began. Then, on the breaking-up day[*the day schools close for holiday*], we caught colds, and whooping cough, and all kinds of disorders, which lasted

till the term recommenced; when, in spite of everything we could manœuvre[maneuver] to the contrary, we would get suddenly well again, and be better than ever.

Such is life; and we are but as grass that is cut down, and put into the oven and baked.

To go back to the carved-oak question, they must have had very fair notions of the artistic and the beautiful, our great-great-grandfathers. Why, all our art treasures of to-day are only the dug-up commonplaces[ordinary things] of three or four hundred years ago. I wonder if there is real intrinsic beauty in the old soup-plates, beer-mugs, and candle-snuffers[a device used to put out a candle] that we prize so now, or if it is only the halo of age glowing around them that gives them their charms in our eyes. The "old blue"[maybe porcelain utensils, steak knives, etc.] that we hang about our walls as ornaments were the common every-day household utensils of a few centuries ago; and the pink shepherds[maybe male figurines] and the yellow shepherdesses[maybe female figurines] that we hand round now for all our friends to gush over, and pretend they understand, were the unvalued mantel ornaments that the mother of the eighteenth century would have given the baby to suck when he cried.

Will it be the same in the future? Will the prized treasures of to-



day always be the cheap trifles of the day before? Will rows of our willow-pattern dinner-plates be ranged[placed] above the chimney-pieces of the great in the years 2000 and odd? Will the white cups with the gold rim and the beautiful gold flower inside (species unknown), that our Sarah Janes[Sarah Jane is a name of Hebrew origin meaning "princess"; here, Jerome probably just means ladies] now break in

sheer light-heartedness of spirit, be carefully mended, and stood upon a bracket, and dusted only by the lady of the house?

That china dog that ornaments the bedroom of my furnished lodgings. It is a white dog. Its eyes blue. Its nose is a delicate red, with spots. Its head is painfully erect, its expression is amiability [friendliness] carried to verge of imbecility[feebleness]. I do not admire it myself. Considered as a work of art, I may say it irritates me. Thoughtless friends jeer at it, and even my landlady herself has no

admiration for it, and excuses its presence by the circumstance that her aunt gave it to her.

But in 200 years' time it is more than probable that that dog will be dug up from somewhere or other, minus its legs, and with its tail broken, and will be sold for old china, and put in a glass cabinet. And people will pass it round, and admire it. They will be struck by the wonderful depth of the colour[color] on the nose, and speculate as to how beautiful the bit of the tail that is lost no doubt was.

We, in this age, do not see the beauty of that dog. We are too familiar with it. It is like the sunset and the stars: we are not awed by their loveliness because they are common to our eyes. So it is with that china dog. In 2288 people will gush over it. The making of such dogs will have become a lost art. Our descendants will wonder how we did it, and say how clever we were. We shall be referred to lovingly as "those grand old artists that flourished in the nineteenth century, and produced those china dogs."

The "sampler"[needlework] that the eldest daughter did at school will be spoken of as "tapestry of the Victorian era," and be almost priceless. The blue-and-white mugs of the present-day roadside inn will be hunted up, all cracked and chipped, and sold for their weight in gold, and rich people will use them for claret[red wine] cups; and travelers from Japan will buy up all the "Presents from Ramsgate," and "Souvenirs of Margate," that may have escaped destruction, and take them back to Jedo[former name of Tokyo; spelled Edo nowadays] as ancient English curios[rare or bizarre objects].

At this point Harris threw away the sculls, got up and left his seat, and sat on his back, and stuck his legs in the air. Montmorency howled, and turned a somersault, and the top hamper jumped up, and all the things came out.

I was somewhat surprised, but I did not lose my temper. I said, pleasantly enough:

"Hulloa![interjection indicating surprise rather than greeting] what's that for?"

"What's that for? Why—"

No, on second thoughts, I will not repeat what Harris said. I may have been to blame, I admit it; but nothing excuses violence of language and coarseness of expression, especially in a man who has

been carefully brought up, as I know Harris has been. I was thinking of other things, and forgot, as any one might easily understand, that I was steering, and the consequence was that we had got mixed up a good deal with the tow-path[towing path; a path by the side of a canal or river for people or horses to tow boats]. It was difficult to say, for the moment, which was us and which was the Middlesex[a county in southeast England with the Thames to its south] bank of the river; but we found out after a while, and separated ourselves.

Harris, however, said he had done enough for a bit, and proposed that I should take a turn; so, as we were in, I got out and took the tow-line, and ran the boat on past Hampton Court. What a dear old wall that is that runs along by the river there! I never pass it without feeling better for the sight of it. Such a mellow, bright, sweet old wall; what a charming picture it would make, with the lichen creeping here, and the moss growing there, a shy young vine peeping over the top at this spot, to see what is going on upon the busy river, and the sober old ivy clustering a little farther down! There are fifty shades and tints and hues in every ten yards of that old wall. If I could only draw, and knew how to paint, I could make a lovely sketch of that old wall, I'm sure. I've often thought I should like to live at Hampton Court. It looks so peaceful and so quiet, and it is such a dear old place to ramble round in the early morning before many people are about.

But, there, I don't suppose I should really care for it when it came to actual practice. It would be so ghastly dull and depressing in the evening, when your lamp cast uncanny shadows on the paneled walls, and the echo of distant feet rang through the cold stone corridors, and now drew nearer, and now died away, and all was death-like silence, save the beating of one's own heart.

We are creatures of the sun, we men and women. We love light and life. That is why we crowd into the towns and cities, and the country grows more and more deserted every year. In the sunlight—in the daytime, when Nature is alive and busy all around us, we like the open hill-sides and the deep woods well enough: but in the night, when our Mother Earth has gone to sleep, and left us waking, oh! the world seems so lonesome, and we get frightened, like children in a silent house. Then we sit and sob, and long for the gas-lit streets,



and the sound of human voices, and the answering throb of human life. We feel so helpless and so little in the great stillness, when the dark trees rustle in the night wind. There are so many ghosts about, and their silent sighs make us feel so sad. Let us gather together in the great cities, and light huge bonfires of a million gas-jets [before electricity, gas flame was used for lighting], and shout and sing together, and feel brave.

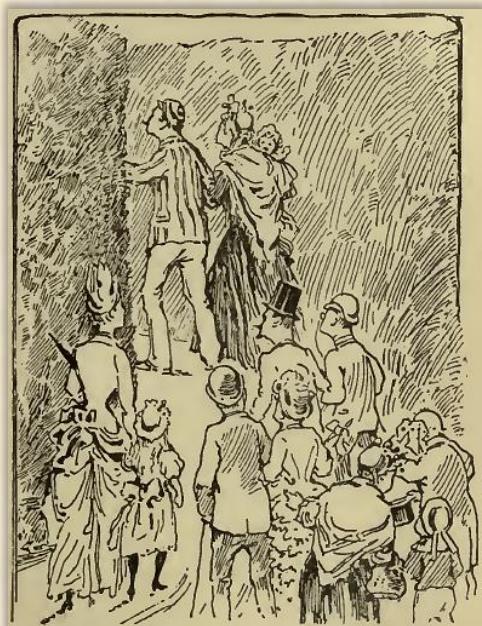
Harris asked me if I'd ever been in the maze at Hampton Court. He said he went in once to show somebody else the way. He had studied it up in a map, and it was so simple that it seemed foolish—hardly worth the twopence charged for admission. Harris said he thought that map must have been got up as a practical joke, because it wasn't a bit like the real thing, and only misleading. It was a

country cousin that Harris took in. He said:

"We'll just go in here, so that you can say you've been, but it's very simple. It's absurd to call it a maze. You keep on taking the first turning to the right. We'll just walk round for ten minutes, and then go and get some lunch."

They met some people soon after they had got inside, who said they had been there for three-quarters of an hour, and had

had about enough of it. Harris told them they could follow him, if they liked; he was just going in, and then should turn round and come out again. They said it was very kind of him, and fell behind, and followed.



They picked up various other people who wanted to get it over, as they went along, until they had absorbed all the persons in the maze. People who had given up all hopes of ever getting either in or out, or of ever seeing their home and friends again, plucked up courage at the sight of Harris and his party, and joined the procession[a line of people], blessing him.

Harris said he should judge there must have been twenty people, following him, in all; and one woman with a baby, who had been there all the morning, insisted on taking his arm, for fear of losing him.

Harris kept on turning to the right, but it seemed a long way, and his cousin said he supposed it was a very big maze.

"Oh, one of the largest in Europe," said Harris.

"Yes, it must be," replied the cousin, "because we've walked a good two miles already."

Harris began to think it rather strange himself, but he held on until, at last, they passed the half of a penny bun[a small sweet roll or cake] on the ground that Harris's cousin swore he had noticed there seven minutes ago. Harris said: "Oh, impossible!" but the woman with the baby said, "Not at all," as she herself had taken it from the child, and thrown it down there, just before she met Harris. She also added that she wished she never had met Harris, and expressed an opinion that he was an impostor. That made Harris mad, and he produced his map, and explained his theory.

"The map may be all right enough," said one of the party, "if you know whereabouts in it we are now."

Harris didn't know, and suggested that the best thing to do would be to go back to the entrance, and begin again. For the beginning again part of it there was not much enthusiasm; but with regard to the advisability of going back to the entrance there was complete unanimity, and so they turned, and trailed after Harris again, in the



Maze at Hampton Court

opposite direction. About ten minutes more passed, and then they found themselves in the centre[center].

Harris thought at first of pretending that that was what he had been aiming at; but the crowd looked dangerous, and he decided to treat it as an accident.

Anyhow, they had got something to start from then. They did know where they were, and the map was once more consulted, and the thing seemed simpler than ever, and off they started for the third time.

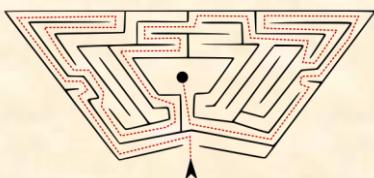
And three minutes later they were back in the centre again.

After that, they simply couldn't get anywhere else. Whatever way they turned brought them back to the middle. It became so regular at length, that some of the people stopped there, and waited for the others to take a walk round, and come back to them. Harris drew out his map again, after a while, but the sight of it only infuriated the mob, and they told him to go and curl his hair with it. Harris said that he couldn't help feeling that, to a certain extent, he had become unpopular.

They all got crazy at last, and sang out for the keeper, and the man came and climbed up the ladder outside, and shouted out directions to them. But all their heads were, by this time, in such a confused whirl that they were incapable of grasping anything, and so the man told them to stop where they were, and he would come to them. They huddled together, and waited; and he climbed down, and came in.

He was a young keeper, as luck would have it, and new to the business; and when he got in, he couldn't find them, and he wandered about, trying to get to them, and then *he* got lost. They caught sight of him, every now and then, rushing about the other side of the hedge, and he would see them, and rush to get to them, and they would wait there for about five minutes, and then he would reappear again in exactly the same spot, and ask them where they had been.

They had to wait till one of the old keepers came back from his dinner before they got out.



Harris said he thought it was a very fine maze, so far as he was a judge; and we agreed that we would try to get George to go into it, on our way back.



Artist unknown (probably English, 19th century), 1850-1900

*Thames Embankment, 1850-1900*

Albumen print, from the album "Views of London"

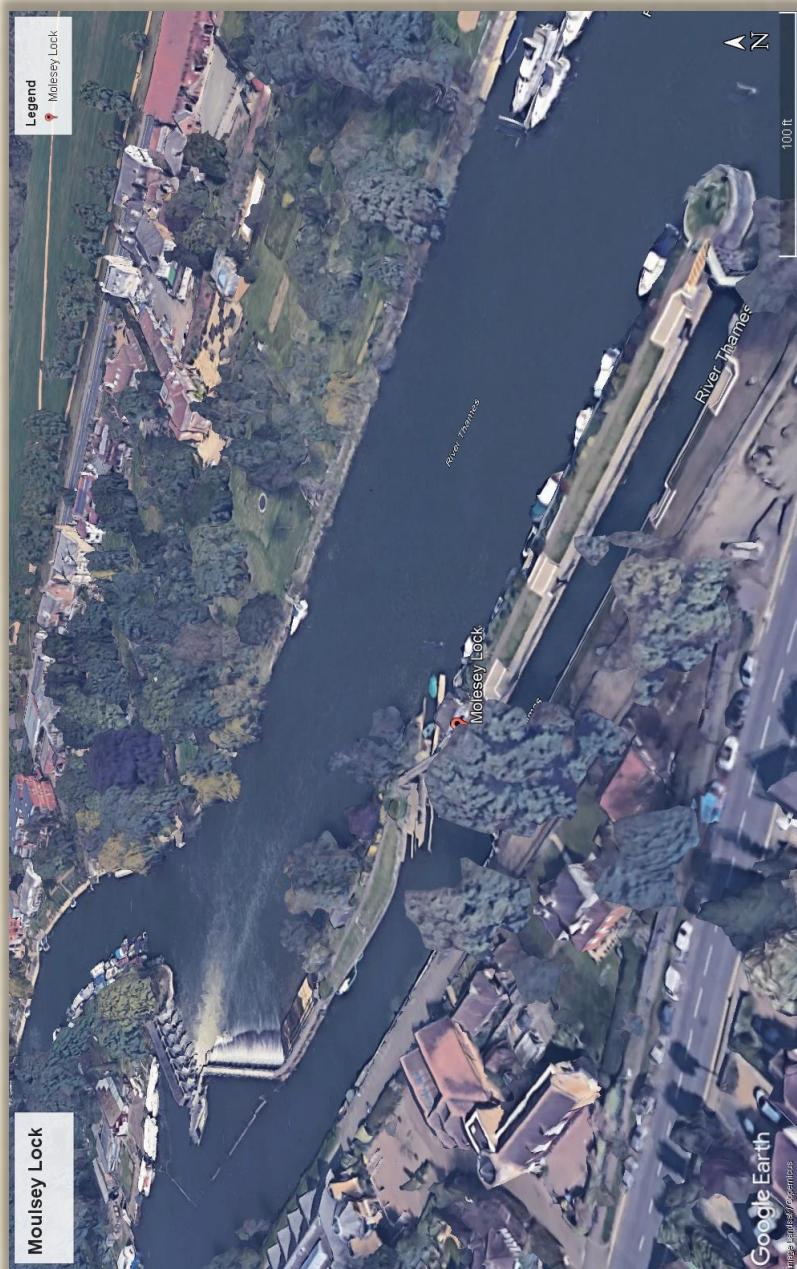
The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER VII

*The river in its Sunday garb.—Dress on the river.—A chance for the men.—Absence of taste in Harris.—George's blazer.—A day with the fashion-plate young lady.—Mrs. Thomas's tomb.—The man who loves not graves and coffins and skulls.—Harris mad.—His views on George and Banks and lemonade.—He performs tricks.*

 It was while passing through Moulsey Lock[a lock on the Thames at East Molesey, Surrey; also, see Appendix D] that Harris told me about his maze experience. It took us some time to pass through, as we were the only boat, and it is a big lock. I don't think I ever remember to have seen Moulsey Lock, before, with only one boat in it. It is, I suppose, Boulter's[another lock] not even excepted, the busiest lock on the river.

I have stood and watched it, sometimes, when you could not see any water at all, but only a brilliant tangle of bright blazers, and gay caps, and saucy hats, and many-coloured[colored] parasols[small umbrellas], and silken rugs, and cloaks, and streaming ribbons, and dainty whites; when looking down into the lock from the quay[a wharf for the loading or delivering of vessels], you might fancy it was a huge box into which flowers of every hue and shade had been thrown pell-mell[randomly], and lay piled up in a rainbow heap, that covered every corner.



On a fine Sunday it presents this appearance nearly all day long, while, up the stream, and down the stream, lie, waiting their turn, outside the gates, long lines of still more boats; and boats are drawing near and passing away, so that the sunny river, from the Palace up to Hampton Church, is dotted and decked with yellow, and blue, and orange, and white, and red, and pink. All the inhabitants of Hampton and Moulsey dress themselves up in boating costume, and come and mouch round the lock with their dogs, and flirt, and smoke, and watch the boats; and, altogether, what with the caps and jackets of the men, the pretty coloured[colored] dresses of the women, the excited dogs, the moving boats, the white sails, the pleasant landscape, and the sparkling water, it is one of the gayest sights I know of near this dull old London town.

The river affords a good opportunity for dress. For once in a way, we men are able to show *our* taste in colours[colors], and I think we come out very natty[neat in appearance], if you ask me. I always like a little red in my things—red and black. You know my hair is a sort of golden brown, rather a pretty shade I've been told, and a dark red matches it beautifully; and then I always think a light-blue necktie goes so well with it, and a pair of those Russian-leather shoes and a red silk handkerchief round the waist—a handkerchief looks so much better than a belt.

Harris always keeps to shades or mixtures of orange or yellow, but I don't think he is at all wise in this. His complexion is too dark for yellows. Yellows don't suit him: there can be no question about it. I want him to take to blue as a background, with white or cream for relief; but, there! the less taste a person has in dress, the more obstinate[stubborn] he always seems to be. It is a great pity, because he will never be a success as it is, while there are one or two colours in which he might not really look so bad, with his hat on.



George has bought some new things for this trip, and I'm rather vexed[irritated] about them. The blazer is loud. I should not like George to know that I thought so, but there really is no other word for it. He brought it

home and showed it to us on Thursday evening. We asked him what colour[color] he called it, and he said he didn't know. He didn't think there was a name for the colour. The man had told him it was an Oriental design. George put it on, and asked us what we thought of it. Harris said that, as an object to hang over a flower-bed in early spring to frighten the birds away, he should respect it; but that, considered as an article of dress for any human being, except a Margate[a popular seaside town on the north coast of Kent in southeast England] nigger[possibly a subservient person employed/working in Margate, but more often defined, in this context, as a white entertainer wearing blackface[black facial makeup] performing song and dance routines for the crowds similar to American minstrel troupes (some of which toured England in the late-1800s); although considered deeply offensive today, please remember that this book was written in 1889 and the word was in common usage at that time. As an example, the 1885 comic opera *The Mikado* by librettist W.S. Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan, not usually considered a controversial duo, wrote the following lyric to their aria As Some Day It May Happen: *There's the nigger serenader, and the others of his race,...* In 1940, the word *nigger* was replaced with *banjo*. For more detailed information on the word, please see Green's Dictionary of Slang at [greensdictofslang.com/entry/n52s6ey](http://greensdictofslang.com/entry/n52s6ey)], it made him ill. George got quite huffy; but, as Harris said, if he didn't want his opinion, why did he ask for it?

What troubles Harris and myself, with regard to it, is that we are afraid it will attract attention to the boat.

Girls, also, don't look half bad in a boat, if prettily dressed. Nothing is more fetching, to my thinking, than a tasteful boating costume. But a "boating costume," it would be as well if all ladies would understand, ought to be a costume that can be worn in a boat, and not merely under a glass case. It utterly spoils an excursion if you have folk in the boat who are thinking all the time a good deal more of their dress than of the trip. It was my misfortune once to go for a water picnic with two ladies of this kind. We did have a lively time!

They were both beautifully got up[dressed up]—all lace and silky stuff, and flowers, and ribbons, and dainty shoes, and light gloves. But they were dressed for a photographic studio, not for a river picnic. They were the "boating costumes" of a French fashion-plate. It was ridiculous, fooling[jesting or teasing] about in them anywhere near real earth, air, and water.

The first thing was that they thought the boat was not clean. We dusted all the seats for them, and then assured them that it was, but they didn't believe us. One of them rubbed the cushion with the forefinger of her glove, and showed the result to the other, and they both sighed, and sat down, with the air of early Christian martyrs trying to make themselves comfortable up against the stake. You are liable to occasionally splash a little when sculling, and it appeared that a drop of water ruined those costumes. The mark never came out, and a stain was left on the dress for ever.



I was stroke[oarsman at the front of the boat]. I did my best. I feathered[turned the blade of the oar horizontally, as it comes out of the water, thus lessening the resistance of the air] some two feet high, and I

paused at the end of each stroke to let the blades drip before returning them, and I picked out a smooth bit of water to drop them into again each time. (Bow[the oarsman at the back of the boat] said, after a while, that he did not feel himself a sufficiently accomplished oarsman to pull with me, but that he would sit still, if I would allow him, and study my stroke. He said it interested him.) But, notwithstanding all this, and try as I would, I could not help an occasional flicker of water from going over those dresses.

The girls did not complain, but they huddled up close together, and set their lips firm, and every time a drop touched them, they visibly shrank and shuddered. It was a noble sight to see them suffering thus in silence, but it unnerved me altogether. I am too sensitive. I got wild and fitful in my rowing, and splashed more and more, the harder I tried not to.

I gave it up at last; I said I'd row bow. Bow thought the arrangement would be better too, and we changed places. The ladies gave an involuntary sigh of relief when they saw me go, and quite brightened up for a moment. Poor girls! they had better have put up with me. The man they had got now was a jolly, light-hearted, thick-headed sort of a chap, with about as much sensitiveness in him as there might be in a Newfoundland puppy. You might look daggers[with an angry expression] at him for an hour and he would not notice it, and it would not trouble him if he did. He set a good, rollicking[carefree], dashing stroke that sent the spray playing all over the boat like a fountain, and made the whole crowd sit up straight in no time. When he spread more than pint of water over one of those dresses, he would give a pleasant little laugh, and say:

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure;" and offer them his handkerchief to wipe it off with.

"Oh, it's of no consequence," the poor girls would murmur in reply, and covertly draw rugs and coats over themselves, and try and protect themselves with their lace parasols.

At lunch they had a very bad time of it. People wanted them to sit on the grass, and the grass was dusty; and the tree-trunks, against which they were invited to lean, did not appear to have been brushed for weeks; so they spread their handkerchiefs on the ground and sat on those, bolt upright. Somebody, in walking about with a plate of beef-steak pie, tripped up over a root, and sent the pie flying. None of it went over them, fortunately, but the accident suggested a fresh

danger to them, and agitated them; and, whenever anybody moved about, after that, with anything in his hand that could fall and make a mess, they watched that person with growing anxiety until he sat down again.

"Now then, you girls," said our friend Bow to them, cheerily, after it was all over, "come along, you've got to wash up!"

They didn't understand him at first. When they grasped the idea, they said they feared they did not know how to wash up.



"Oh, I'll soon show you," he cried; "it's rare fun! You lie down on your—I mean you lean over the bank, you know, and slough[slosh] the things about in the water."

The elder sister said that she was afraid that they hadn't got on dresses suited to the work.

"Oh, they'll be all right," said he light-heartedly; "tuck 'em up."

And he made them do it, too. He told them that that sort of thing was half the fun of a picnic. They said it was very interesting.

Now I come to think it over, was that young man as dense-headed as we thought? or was he—no, impossible! there was such a simple, child-like expression about him!

Harris wanted to get out at Hampton Church, to go and see Mrs. Thomas's tomb.

"Who is Mrs. Thomas?" I asked.

"How should I know?" replied Harris. "She's a lady that's got a funny tomb, and I want to see it."

I objected. I don't know whether it is that I am built wrong, but I never did seem to hanker after tombstones myself. I know that the proper thing to do, when you get to a village or town, is to rush off to the churchyard, and enjoy the graves; but it is a recreation that I always deny myself. I take no interest in creeping round dim and chilly churches behind wheezy old men, and reading epitaphs [inscriptions on a tomb or monument in honor of the dead]. Not even the sight of a bit of cracked brass let into a stone affords me what I call real happiness.

I shock respectable sextons[a person who has charge of a church, attends the clergyman, digs graves, etc.] by the imperturbability[calmness] I am able to assume before exciting inscriptions, and by my lack of enthusiasm for the local family history, while my ill-concealed anxiety to get outside wounds their feelings.

One golden morning of a sunny day, I leant against the low stone wall that guarded a little village church, and I smoked, and drank in deep, calm gladness from the sweet, restful scene—the grey old church with its clustering ivy and its quaint carved wooden porch, the white lane winding down the hill between tall rows of elms, the thatched-roof cottages peeping above their trim-kept hedges, the silver river in the hollow, the wooded hills beyond!

It was a lovely landscape. It was idyllic, poetical, and it inspired me. I felt good and noble. I felt I didn't want to be sinful and wicked any more. I would come and live here, and never do any more wrong, and lead a blameless, beautiful life, and have silver hair when I got old, and all that sort of thing.

In that moment I forgave all my friends and relations for their wickedness and cussedness[stubbornness], and I blessed them. They did not know that I blessed them. They went their abandoned way all unconscious of what I, far away in that peaceful village, was doing for them; but I did it, and I wished that I could let them know that I had done it, because I wanted to make them happy. I was going on thinking away all these grand, tender thoughts, when my reverie[daydreaming] was broken in upon by a shrill piping voice crying out:

"All right, sur[sir], I'm a-coming, I'm a-coming. It's all right, sur; don't you be in a hurry."

I looked up, and saw an old bald-headed man hobbling across the churchyard towards me, carrying a huge bunch of keys in his hand that shook and jingled at every step.

I motioned him away with silent dignity, but he still advanced, screeching out the while:

"I'm a-coming, sur, I'm a-coming. I'm a little lame. I ain't as spry as I used to be. This way, sur."

"Go away, you miserable old man," I said.

"I've come as soon as I could, sur," he replied. "My missis[wife] never see you till just this minute. You follow me, sur."

"Go away," I repeated; "leave me before I get over the wall, and slay[strike] you."

He seemed surprised.

"Don't you want to see the tombs?" he said.

"No," I answered, "I don't. I want to stop here, leaning up against this gritty old wall. Go away, and don't disturb me. I am chock full[quite full] of beautiful and noble thoughts, and I want to stop like it, because it feels nice and good. Don't you come fooling about, making me mad, chivying[harassing] away all my better feelings with this silly tombstone nonsense of yours. Go away, and get somebody to bury you cheap, and I'll pay half the expense."

He was bewildered for a moment. He rubbed his eyes, and looked hard at me. I seemed human enough on the outside: he couldn't make it out.

He said:

"Yuise[You is] a stranger in these parts? You don't live here?"

"No," I said, "I don't. *You* wouldn't if *I* did."

"Well then," he said, "you want to see the tombs—graves—folks been buried, you know—coffins!"

"You are an untruther[liar]," I replied, getting roused; "I do not want to see tombs—not your tombs. Why should I? We have graves of our own, our family has. Why my uncle Podger has a tomb in Kensal Green[an area in northwest London] Cemetery, that is the pride of all that country-side; and my grandfather's vault at Bow[an



area in east London] is capable of accommodating eight visitors, while



my great-aunt Susan has a brick grave in Finchley [an area north of London] Churchyard, with a headstone with a coffee-pot sort of thing in bas-relief [nearly flat sculpture carved into the stone giving a slight 3D appearance] upon it, and a six-inch best white stone coping

[covering] all the way round, that cost pounds. When I want graves, it is to those places that I go and revel. I do not want other folk's. When you yourself are buried, I will come and see yours. That is all I can do for you."

He burst into tears. He said that



he said:

"Well, won't you come and see the memorial window?"

I would not even see that, so he fired his last shot. He drew near, and whispered hoarsely:

"I've got a couple of skulls down in the crypt," he said; "come and see those. Oh, do come and see the skulls! You are a young man out for a holiday, and you want to enjoy yourself. Come and see the skulls!"

Then I turned and fled, and as I sped I heard him calling to me:



one of the tombs had a bit of stone upon the top of it that had been said by some to be probably part of the remains of the figure of a man, and that another had some words, carved upon it, that nobody had ever been able to decipher.

I still remained obdurate [stubborn], and, in broken-hearted tones,



"Oh, come and see the skulls; come back and see the skulls!"

Harris, however, revels in tombs, and graves, and epitaphs, and monumental inscriptions, and the thought of not seeing Mrs. Thomas's grave made him crazy. He said he had looked forward to seeing Mrs. Thomas's grave from the first moment that the trip was proposed—said he wouldn't have joined if it hadn't been for the idea of seeing Mrs. Thomas's tomb.

I reminded him of George, and how we had to get the boat up to Shepperton[a village in county Surrey 15 miles southwest of London]



by five o'clock to meet him, and then he went for George. Why was George to fool about all day, and leave us to lug this lumbering old top-heavy barge up and down the river by ourselves to meet him? Why couldn't George come and do some work? Why couldn't he have got the day off, and come down with us?

Bank be blowed[damned]! What good was he at the bank?

"I never see him doing any work there," continued Harris, "whenever I go in. He sits behind a bit of glass all day, trying to look as if he was doing something. What's the good of a man behind a bit of glass? I have to work for my living. Why can't he work? What use is he there, and what's the good of their banks? They take your money, and then, when you draw a cheque[check], they send it back smeared all over with 'No effects,' 'Refer to drawer.' What's the good of that? That's the sort of trick they served me twice last week. I'm not going to stand it much longer. I shall withdraw my account. If he was here, we could go and see that tomb. I don't believe he's at the bank at all. He's larking about[fooling around] some-where, that's what he's doing, leaving us to do all the work. I'm going to get out, and have a drink."

I pointed out to him that we were miles away from a pub; and then he went on about the river, and what was the good of the river, and was everyone who came on the river to die of thirst?

It is always best to let Harris have his head when he gets like this. Then he pumps himself out, and is quiet afterwards.

I reminded him that there was concentrated lemonade in the hamper, and a gallon jar of water in the nose of the boat, and that the two only wanted mixing to make a cool and refreshing beverage.



St. George battles the dragon (example of bas relief)

Then he flew off about lemonade, and "such like Sunday-school slops," as he termed them, ginger-beer, raspberry syrup, etc., etc. He said they all produced dyspepsia [indigestion], and ruined body and soul alike, and were the cause of half the crime in England.

He said he must drink something, however, and climbed upon the seat, and leant [leaned] over to get the bottle. It was right at the bottom of the hamper, and seemed difficult to find, and he had to lean over further and further, and, in trying to steer at the same time, from a topsy-turvy point of view, he pulled the wrong line, and sent the boat into the bank, and the shock upset him, and he dived down right into the hamper, and stood there on his head, holding on to the sides of the boat like grim death, his legs sticking up into the air. He

dared not move for fear of going over, and had to stay there till I could get hold of his legs, and haul him back, and that made him madder than ever.





Maxime Lalanne (French, 1827-1886)

*Banks of the Thames Near London*, 1869

Drypoint on cream simili-Japan, laid down on heavy card

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER VIII

*Blackmailing.—The proper course to pursue.—Selfish boorishness of river-side landowner.—"Notice" boards.—Unchristianlike feelings of Harris.—How Harris sings a comic song.—A high-class party.—Shameful conduct of two abandoned young men.—Some useless information.—George buys a banjo.*

e stopped under the willows by Kempton Park [13 miles southeast of London], and lunched. It is a pretty little spot there: a pleasant grass plateau, running along by the water's edge, and overhung by willows. We had just commenced the third course—the bread and jam—when a gentleman in shirt-sleeves and a short pipe came along, and wanted to know if we knew that we were trespassing. We said we hadn't given the matter sufficient consideration as yet to enable us to arrive at a definite conclusion on that point, but that, if he assured us on his word as a gentleman that we *were* trespassing, we would, without further hesitation, believe it.

He gave us the required assurance, and we thanked him, but he still hung about, and seemed to be dissatisfied, so we asked him if there was anything further that we could do for him; and Harris, who is of a chummy[friendly] disposition[tendency], offered him a bit of bread and jam.

I fancy he must have belonged to some society sworn to abstain from bread and jam; for he declined it quite gruffly[sternly], as if he were vexed[irritated] at being tempted with it, and he added that it was his duty to turn us off[in this context, to remove the men from the property].

Harris said that if it was a duty it ought to be done, and asked the man what was his idea with regard to the best means for accomplishing it. Harris is what you would call a well-made man of about number one size, and looks hard and bony, and the man measured him up and down, and said he would go and consult his master, and then come back and chuck us both into the river.

Of course, we never saw him any more, and, of course, all he really wanted was a shilling. There are a certain number of riverside roughs[uncivil people] who make quite an income, during the summer, by slouching about the banks and blackmailing weak-minded noodles[idiots] in this way. They represent themselves as sent by the proprietor. The proper course to pursue is to offer your name and address, and leave the owner, if he really has anything to do with the matter, to summon you, and prove what damage you have done to his land by sitting down on a bit of it. But the majority of people are so intensely lazy and timid, that they prefer to encourage the imposition[deception] by giving in to it rather than put an end to it by the exertion of a little firmness. Where it is really the owners that are to blame, they ought to be shown up. The selfishness of the riparian[relating to the bank of a river] proprietor grows with every year. If these men had their way they would close the river Thames altogether. They actually do this along the minor tributary streams and in the backwaters. They drive posts into the bed of the stream, and draw chains across from bank to bank, and nail huge notice-boards on every tree. The sight of those notice-boards rouses every evil instinct in my nature. I feel I want to tear each one down, and hammer it over the head of the man who put it up, until I have killed him, and then I would bury him, and put the board up over the grave as a tombstone.

I mentioned these feelings of mine to Harris, and he said he had them worse than that. He said he not only felt he wanted to kill the man who caused the board to be put up, but that he should like to slaughter the whole of his family and all his friends and relations, and then burn down his house. This seemed to me to be going too far, and I said so to Harris; but he answered:

"Not a bit of it. Serve 'em[them] all jolly well right, and I'd go and sing comic songs on the ruins."

I was vexed to hear Harris go on in this blood-thirsty strain. We never ought to allow our instincts of justice to degenerate[*to fall from a nobler state*] into mere vindictiveness[*revengefulness*]. It was a long while before I could get Harris to take a more Christian view of the subject, but I succeeded at last, and he promised me that he would spare the friends and relations at all events, and would not sing comic songs on the ruins.

You have never heard Harris sing a comic song, or you would understand the service I had rendered to mankind. It is one of Harris's fixed ideas that he *can* sing a comic song; the fixed idea, on the contrary, among those of Harris's friends who have heard him try, is that he *can't* and never will be able to, and that he ought not to be allowed to try.

When Harris is at a party, and is asked to sing, he replies: "Well, I can only sing a *comic* song, you know;" and he says it in a tone that implies that his singing of *that*, however, is a thing that you ought to hear once, and then die.

"Oh, that *is* nice," says the hostess. "Do sing one, Mr. Harris;" and Harris gets up, and makes for the piano, with the beaming cheeriness of a generous-minded man who is just about to give somebody something.

"Now, silence, please, everybody" says the hostess, turning round; "Mr. Harris is going to sing a comic song!"

"Oh, how jolly!" they murmur; and they hurry in from the conservatory[*a room extending from the side of a home with glass-paneled sides and roof; greenhouse*], and come up from the stairs, and go and fetch each other from all over the house, and crowd into the drawing-room[*a room to which invited guests withdraw after dinner*], and sit round, all smirking in anticipation.

Then Harris begins.

Well, you don't look for much of a voice in a comic song. You don't expect correct phrasing or vocalization. You don't mind if a man does find out, when in the middle of a note, that he is too high, and comes down with a jerk. You don't bother about time. You don't mind a man being two bars in front of the accompaniment, and

easing up in the middle of a line to argue it out with the pianist, and then starting the verse afresh[again]. But you do expect the words.

You don't expect a man to never remember more than the first three lines of the first verse, and to keep on repeating these until it is time to begin the chorus[verses of a song in which the guests join the singer]. You don't expect a man to break off in the middle of a line, and snigger[a half-suppressed, broken laugh], and say, it's very funny, but he's blest[blessed] if he can think of the rest of it, and then try and make it up for himself, and, afterwards, suddenly recollect it, when he has got to an entirely different part of the song, and break off, without a word of warning, to go back and let you have it then and there. You don't—well, I will just give you an idea of Harris's comic singing, and then you can judge of it for yourself.

HARRIS (*standing up in front of piano and addressing the expectant mob*): "I'm afraid it's a very old thing, you know. I expect you all know it, you know. But it's the only thing I know. It's the Judge's song out of *Pinafore*—no, I don't mean *Pinafore*—I mean—you know what I mean—the other thing, you know. You must all join in the chorus, you know."

[*Murmurs of delight and anxiety to join in the chorus. Brilliant performance of prelude to the Judge's song in "Trial by Jury" by nervous Pianist. Moment arrives for Harris to join in. Harris takes no notice of it. Nervous pianist commences prelude over again, and Harris, commencing singing at the same time, dashes off the first two lines of the First Lord's song out of "Pinafore." Nervous pianist tries to push on with prelude, gives it up, and tries to follow Harris with accompaniment to Judge's song out of "Trial by Jury," finds that doesn't answer, and tries to recollect what he is doing, and where he is, feels his mind giving way, and stops short.*]

HARRIS (*with kindly encouragement*): "It's all right. You're doing it very well,



indeed—go on."

NERVOUS PIANIST: "I'm afraid there's a mistake somewhere. What are you singing?"

HARRIS (*promptly*): "Why the Judge's song out of *Trial by Jury*. Don't you know it?"

SOME FRIEND OF HARRIS'S (*from the back of the room*): "No, you're not, you chucklehead, you're singing the Admiral's song from *Pinafore*."

[*Long argument between Harris and Harris's friend as to what Harris is really singing. Friend finally suggests that it doesn't matter what Harris is singing so long as Harris gets on and sings it, and Harris, with an evident sense of injustice rankling inside him, requests pianist to begin again. Pianist, thereupon, starts prelude to the Admiral's song, and Harris, seizing what he considers to be a favourable opening in the music, begins.*]

HARRIS:

" 'When I was young and called to the Bar!'"

[*General roar of laughter, taken by Harris as a compliment. Pianist, thinking of his wife and family, gives up the unequal contest and retires [retreats]; his place being taken by a stronger-nerved man.*]

THE NEW PIANIST (*cheerily*): "Now then, old man, you start off, and I'll follow. We won't bother about any prelude."

HARRIS (*upon whom the explanation of matters has slowly dawned—laughing*): "By Jove! I beg your pardon. Of course—I've been mixing up the two songs. It was Jenkins confused me, you know. Now then.

[*Singing, his voice appearing to come from the cellar, and suggesting the first low warnings of an approaching earthquake.*]

" 'When I was young I served a term  
As office-boy to an attorney's firm!'"

(*Aside to pianist*): "It is too low, old man; we'll have that over again, if you don't mind."

[*Sings first two lines over again, in a high falsetto* [singing outside one's natural range; here, singing in a high-pitched voice] *this time. Great surprise on the part of the audience. Nervous old lady near the fire begins to cry, and has to be led out.*]

HARRIS (*continuing*):

" 'I swept the windows and I swept the door,  
And I—'

No—no, I cleaned the windows of the big front door. And I polished up the floor—no, dash it—I beg your pardon—funny thing, I can't think of that line. And I—and I—Oh, well, we'll get on to the chorus, and chance it (*sings*):

" 'And I diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-de,  
Till now I am the ruler of the Queen's navee[navy].'

Now then, chorus—it is the last two lines repeated, you know."

GENERAL CHORUS:

"And he diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-dee'd,  
Till now he is the ruler of the Queen's navee."

And Harris never sees what an ass he is making of himself, and how he is annoying a lot of people who never did him any harm. He honestly imagines that he has given them a treat, and says he will sing another comic song after supper.

[The comic song referred to above as the *Admiral's Song*, also known as *Sir Joseph Porter's Song* or *When I Was a Lad*, is from the comic opera *H. M. S. Pinafore* by Gilbert and Sullivan which opened in 1878. The song in its entirety appears below. There are many versions on YouTube, here is one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCBxI9yKLgw>.

*Sir Joseph:* When I was a lad I served a term  
As office boy to an attorney's firm.  
I cleaned the windows and I swept the floor,  
And I polished up the handle of the big front door.

*Chorus:* He polished up the handle of the big front door.

*Sir Joseph:* I polished up that handle so carefullie [carefully]  
That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee [navy].

*Chorus:* He polished up that handle so carefullie  
That now he is the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Sir Joseph:* As office boy I made such a mark  
That they gave me the post of a junior clerk.  
I served the wrists with a smile so bland,  
And I copied all the letters in a big round hand.

[*writ: a document issued by a court ordering someone to refrain from doing a specified act.*]

*Chorus:* He copied all the letters in a big round hand.

*Sir Joseph:* I copied all the letters in a hand so free,  
That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Chorus:* He copied all the letters in a hand so free,  
That now he is the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Sir Joseph:* In serving wrists I made such a name  
That an articled clerk I soon became;  
I wore clean collars and a brand-new suit  
For the pass examination at the Institute,

[*articled clerk: a trainee to a professional solicitor.*]

*Chorus:* For the pass examination at the Institute.

*Sir Joseph:* That pass examination did so well for me,  
That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Chorus:* That pass examination did so well for he,  
That now he is the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Sir Joseph:* Of legal knowledge I acquired such a grip  
That they took me into the partnership.  
And that junior partnership, I ween,  
Was the only ship that I ever had seen.

*Chorus:* Was the only ship that I ever had seen.

*Sir Joseph:* But that kind of ship so suited me,  
That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Chorus:* But that kind of ship so suited he,  
That now he is the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Sir Joseph:* I grew so rich that I was sent  
By a pocket borough into parliament.  
I always voted at my party's call,  
And I never thought of thinking for myself at all.

[*pocket borough: a city whose representatives are controlled by one person or family who owns the land.*]

*Chorus:* He never thought of thinking for himself at all.

*Sir Joseph:* I thought so little, they rewarded me  
By making me the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Chorus:* He thought so little, they rewarded he  
By making him the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

*Sir Joseph:* Now landsmen[non-sailors] all, whoever you may be,  
If you want to rise to the top of the tree,  
If your soul isn't fettered[bound] to an office stool,  
Be careful to be guided by this golden rule.

*Chorus:* Be careful to be guided by this golden rule.

*Sir Joseph:* Stick close to your desks and never go to sea,  
And you all may be rulers of the Queen's Navee.

*Chorus:* Stick close to your desks and never go to sea,  
And you all may be rulers of the Queen's Navee.

]

Speaking of comic songs and parties, reminds me of a rather curious incident at which I once assisted; which, as it throws much light upon the inner mental working of human nature in general, ought, I think, to be recorded in these pages.

We were a fashionable and highly cultured party. We had on our best clothes, and we talked pretty, and were very happy—all except

two young fellows, students, just returned from Germany, commonplace young men, who seemed restless and uncomfortable, as if they found the proceedings slow. The truth was, we were too clever for them. Our brilliant but polished conversation, and our high-class tastes, were beyond them. They were out of place, among us. They never ought to have been there at all. Everybody agreed upon that, later on.

We played *morceaux*[brief musical compositions] from the old German masters. We discussed philosophy and ethics. We flirted with graceful dignity. We were even humorous—in a high-class way.

Somebody recited a French poem after supper, and we said it was beautiful; and then a lady sang a sentimental ballad in Spanish, and it made one or two of us weep—it was so pathetic.

And then those two young men got up, and asked us if we had ever heard Herr Slossenn Boschen (who had just arrived, and was then down in the supper-room) sing his great German comic song.

None of us had heard it, that we could remember.

The young men said it was the funniest song that had ever been written, and that, if we liked, they would get Herr Slossenn Boschen, whom they knew very well, to sing it. They said it was so funny that, when Herr Slossenn Boschen had sung it once before the German Emperor, he (the German Emperor) had had to be carried off to bed.

They said nobody could sing it like Herr Slossenn Boschen; he was so intensely serious all through it that you might fancy he was reciting a tragedy, and that, of course, made it all the funnier. They said he never once suggested by his tone or manner that he was singing anything funny—that would spoil it. It was his air of seriousness, almost of pathos[suffering], that made it so irresistibly amusing.

We said we yearned to hear it, that we wanted a good laugh; and they went downstairs, and fetched Herr Slossenn Boschen.

He appeared to be quite pleased to sing it, for he came up at once, and sat down to the piano without another word.

"Oh, it will amuse you. You will laugh," whispered the two young men, as they passed through the room, and took up an unobtrusive[inconspicuous] position behind the Professor's back.

Herr Slossenn Boschen accompanied himself. The prelude did not suggest a comic song exactly. It was a weird, soulful air. It quite made one's flesh creep; but we murmured to one another that it was the German method, and prepared to enjoy it.

I don't understand German myself. I learned it at school, but forgot every word of it two years after I had left, and have felt much better ever since. Still, I did not want the people there to guess my ignorance; so I hit upon what I thought to be rather a good idea. I kept my eye on the two young students, and followed them. When they tittered[laughed restrainedly], I tittered; when they roared, I roared; and I also threw in a little snigger all by myself now and then, as if I had seen a bit of humour[humor] that had escaped the others. I considered this particularly artful on my part.

I noticed, as the song progressed, that a good many other people seemed to have their eye fixed on the two young men, as well as myself. These other people also tittered when the young men tittered, and roared when the young men roared; and, as the two young men tittered and roared and exploded with laughter pretty continuously all through the song, it went exceedingly well.

And yet that German Professor did not seem happy. At first, when we began to laugh, the expression of his face was one of intense surprise, as if laughter were the very last thing he had expected to be greeted with. We thought this very funny: we said his earnest[serious] manner was half the humour. The slightest hint on his part that he knew how funny he was would have completely ruined it all. As we continued to laugh, his surprise gave way to an air of annoyance and indignation, and he scowled fiercely round upon us all (except upon the two young men who, being behind him, he could not see). That sent us into convulsions[in this context, fits of laughter]. We told each other that it would be the death of us, this thing. The words alone, we said, were enough to send us into fits, but added to his mock seriousness—oh, it was too much!

In the last verse, he surpassed himself. He glowered[stared angrily] round upon us with a look of such concentrated ferocity[savage fierceness] that, but for our being forewarned as to the German method of comic singing, we should have been nervous; and he threw such a wailing[mournful sounding] note of agony into the weird music that, if we had not known it was a funny song, we might have wept.

He finished amid a perfect shriek of laughter. We said it was the funniest thing we had ever heard in all our lives. We said how strange it was that, in the face of things like these, there should be a popular notion that the Germans hadn't any sense of humour. And we asked the Professor why he didn't translate the song into English, so that the common people could understand it, and hear what a real comic song was like.

Then Herr Slossenn Boschen got up, and went on awful. He swore at us in German (which I should judge to be a singularly effective language for that purpose), and he danced[in this context, moved around violently], and shook his fists, and called us all the English he knew. He said he had never been so insulted in all his life.

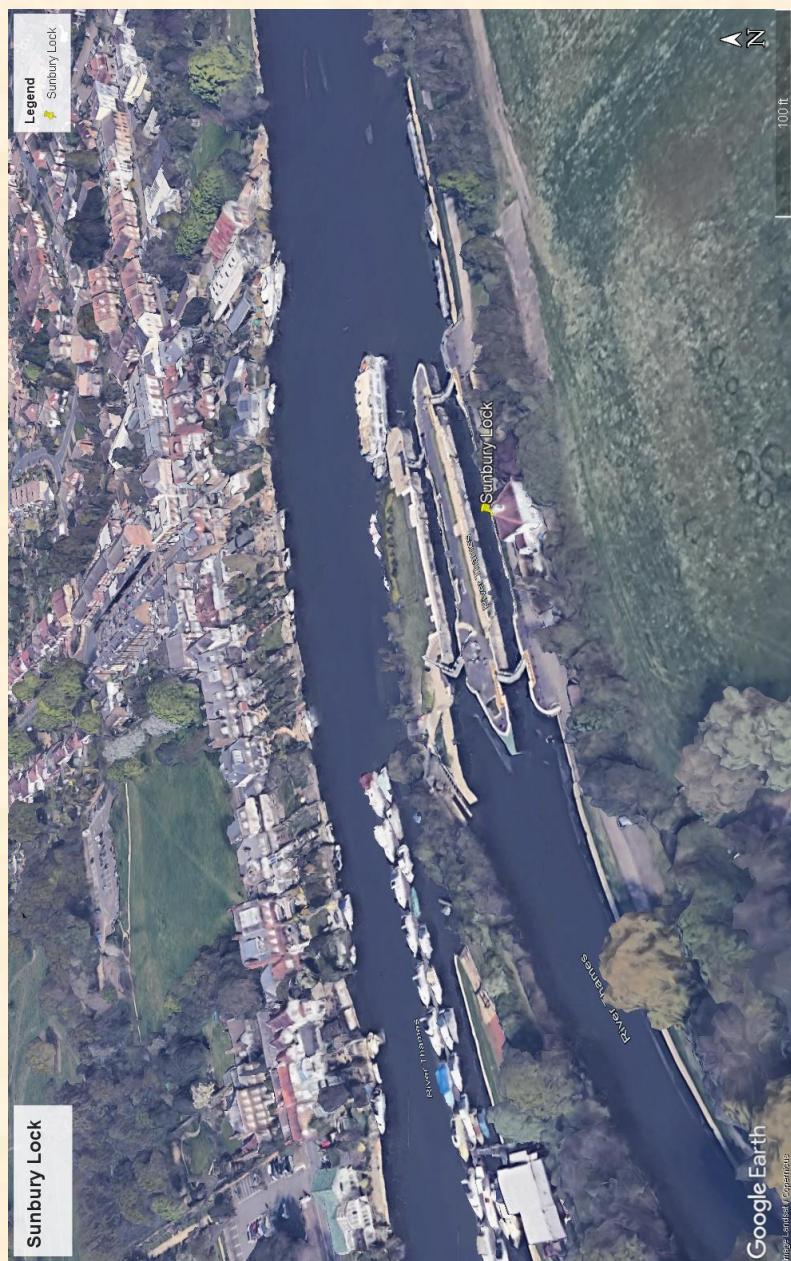
It appeared that the song was not a comic song at all. It was about a young girl who lived in the Hartz Mountains[Jerome probably means Harz, a mountain range in northern Germany with an elevation of 3744 ft/1141 m], and who had given up her life to save her lover's soul; and he died, and met her spirit in the air; and then, in the last verse, he jilted her spirit, and went on with another spirit—I'm not quite sure of the details, but it was something very sad, I know. Herr Boschen said he had sung it once before the German Emperor, and he (the German Emperor) had sobbed like a little child. He (Herr Boschen) said it was generally acknowledged to be one of the most tragic and pathetic songs in the German language.

It was a trying situation for us—very trying. There seemed to be no answer. We looked around for the two young men who had done this thing, but they had left the house in an unostentatious[discreet] manner immediately after the end of the song.

That was the end of that party. I never saw a party break up so quietly, and with so little fuss. We never said good-night even to one another. We came downstairs one at a time, walking softly, and keeping the shady side[trying not to be seen; hiding]. We asked the servant for our hats and coats in whispers, and opened the door for ourselves, and slipped out, and got round the corner quickly, avoiding each other as much as possible.

I have never taken much interest in German songs since then.

We reached Sunbury Lock[located in northwest Surrey] at half-past three. The river is sweetly pretty just there before you come to the gates, and the backwater is charming; but don't attempt to row up it.



I tried to do so once. I was sculling, and asked the fellows who were steering if they thought it could be done, and they said, oh, yes, they thought so, if I pulled hard. We were just under the little foot-bridge that crosses it between the two weirs[dams; see image below], when they said this, and I bent down over the sculls, and set myself up, and pulled.



**Hambleden Lock with weir**

I pulled splendidly. I got well into a steady rhythmical swing. I put my arms, and my legs, and my back into it. I set myself a good, quick, dashing stroke, and worked in really grand style. My two friends said it was a pleasure to watch me. At the end of five minutes, I thought we ought to be pretty near the weir, and I looked up. We were under the bridge, in exactly the same spot that we were when I began, and there were those two idiots, injuring themselves by violent laughing. I had been grinding away like mad to keep that boat stuck still under that bridge. I let other people pull up backwaters against strong streams now.

We sculled up to Walton[Walton-on-Thames], a rather large place for a riverside town. As with all riverside places, only the tiniest corner of it



comes down to the water, so that from the boat you might fancy it was a village of some half-dozen houses, all told. Windsor and Abingdon are the only towns between London and Oxford that you can really see anything of from the stream. All the others hide round corners, and merely peep at the river down one street: my thanks to them for being so considerate, and leaving the river-banks to woods and fields and water-works.

Even Reading, though it does its best to spoil and sully[tarnish] and make hideous as much of the river as it can reach, is good-natured enough to keep its ugly face a good deal out of sight.

Cæsar[Roman general and statesman, 12 July 100 B.C. – 15 March 44 B.C.], of course, had a little place at Walton—a camp, or an entrenchment, or something of that sort. Cæsar was a regular up-river man. Also Queen Elizabeth, she was there, too. You can never get away from that woman, go where you will. Cromwell and Bradshaw (not the guide man, but the King Charles's head man) likewise sojourned[stayed for a period of time] here.[Jerome is referring to John Bradshaw, the English jurist who was the President of the High Court of Justice for the trial of King Charles I, and not George Bradshaw, the English cartographer, printer and publisher known for his railway guidebooks. Bradshaw, in his role as President of the High Court of Justice, convinced the jury to condemn King Charles I to death by beheading. So, Jerome referring to Bradshaw as *King Charles's head man* is a rather morbid joke.] They must have been quite a pleasant little party, altogether.

There is an iron "scold's bridle"[an iron framework enclosing the head with a metal plate, often containing a spike, placed on top of the tongue to prevent the wearer from speaking...the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a real barrel of laughs] in Walton Church. They used these things in ancient days for curbing women's tongues. They have given up the attempt now. I suppose iron was getting scarce, and nothing else would be strong enough.

There are also tombs of note in the church, and I was afraid I should never get Harris past them; but he didn't seem to think of them, and we went on. Above the bridge the river winds



An entrenchment

tremendously. This makes it look picturesque; but it irritates you from a towing or sculling point of view, and causes argument between the man who is pulling and the man who is steering.

You pass Oatlands Park on the right bank here. It is a famous old place. Henry VIII stole it from some one or the other, I forget whom now, and lived in it. There is a grotto [subterranean (underground) cavern] in the park which you can see for a fee, and which is supposed to be very wonderful; but I cannot see much in it myself. The late Duchess of York, who lived at Oatlands, was very fond of dogs, and kept an immense number. She had a special graveyard made, in which to bury them when they died, and there they lie, about fifty of them, with a tombstone over each, and an epitaph inscribed thereon.



Well, I dare say they deserve it quite as much as the average Christian does.



**Duchess of York's Dogs' Graveyard**

At "Corway Stakes"—the first bend above Walton Bridge—was fought a battle between Cæsar and Cassivelaunus [British military leader who led the defense against Cæsar's second invasion of Britain in 54 B.C.]. Cassivelaunus had prepared the river for Cæsar, by planting it full of stakes (and had, no doubt, put up a notice-board). But Cæsar crossed in spite of this. You couldn't choke Cæsar off that river. He is the sort of man we want round the backwaters now.

Halliford [a neighborhood of Shepperton] and Shepperton are both pretty little spots where they touch the river; but there is nothing remarkable about either of them. There is a tomb in Shepperton churchyard, however, with a poem on it, and I was nervous lest

Harris should want to get out and fool round it. I saw him fix a longing eye on the landing-stage as we drew near it, so I managed, by an adroit[skillful] movement, to jerk his cap into the water, and in the excitement of recovering that, and his indignation at my clumsiness, he forgot all about his beloved graves.

At Weybridge, the Wey (a pretty little stream, navigable for small boats up to Guildford, and one which I have always been making up my mind to explore, and never have), the Bourne, and the Basingstoke Canal all enter the Thames together. The lock is just opposite the town, and the first thing that we saw, when we came in view of it, was George's blazer on one of the lock gates, closer inspection showing that George was inside it.



Montmorency set up a furious barking, I shrieked, Harris roared; George waved his hat, and yelled back. The lock-keeper rushed out with a drag, under the impression that somebody had fallen into the lock, and appeared annoyed at finding that no one had.

George had rather a curious oilskin-covered[waterproofed] parcel in his hand. It was round and flat at one end, with a long straight handle sticking out of it.

"What's that?" said Harris—"a frying-pan?"

"No," said George, with a strange, wild look glittering in his eyes; "they are all the rage this season; everybody has got them up the river. It's a banjo."

"I never knew you played the banjo!" cried Harris and I, in one breath.

"Not exactly," replied George: "but it's very easy, they tell me; and I've got the instruction book!"







Thomas Rowlandson (English, 1756-1827)

*A View on the Thames*, n.d.

Pen and brown ink with brush and watercolor, over traces of graphite, on  
ivory wove paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER IX

*George is introduced to work.—Heathenish instincts of tow-lines.—Ungrateful conduct of a double-sculling skiff.—Towers and towed.—A use discovered for lovers.—Strange disappearance of an elderly lady.—Much baste, less speed.—Being towed by girls: exciting sensation.—The missing lock or the haunted river.—Music.—Saved!*

 e made George work, now we had got him. He did not want to work, of course; that goes without saying. He had had a hard time in the City, so he explained. Harris, who is callous[unfeeling] in his nature, and not prone to pity, said:

"Ah! and now you are going to have a hard time on the river for a change; change is good for everyone. Out you get!"

He could not in conscience—not even George's conscience—object, though he did suggest that, perhaps, it would be better for him to stop in the boat, and get tea ready, while Harris and I towed, because getting tea was such a worrying work, and Harris and I looked tired. The only reply we made to this, however, was to pass him over the tow-line[a rope used to tow a boat], and he took it, and stepped out.

There is something very strange and unaccountable about a tow-line. You roll it up with as much patience and care as you would take

to fold up a new pair of trousers, and five minutes afterwards, when you pick it up, it is one ghastly, soul-revolting tangle.

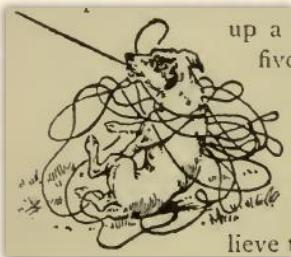
I do not wish to be insulting, but I firmly believe that if you took an average tow-line, and stretched it out straight across the middle of a field, and then turned your back on it for thirty seconds, that, when you looked round again, you would find that it had got itself altogether in a heap in the middle of the field, and had twisted itself up, and tied itself into knots, and lost its two ends, and become all loops; and it would take you a good half-hour, sitting down there on the grass and swearing all the while, to disentangle it again.

That is my opinion of tow-lines in general. Of course, there may be honourable[honorable] exceptions; I do not say that there are not. There may be tow-lines that are a credit to their profession—conscientious, respectable tow-lines—tow-lines that do not imagine they are crochet-work, and try to knit themselves up into antimacassars[one or more pieces of cloth placed on a chair to prevent soiling the fabric] the instant they are left to themselves. I say there *may* be such tow-lines; I sincerely hope there are. But I have not met with them.

This tow-line I had taken in myself just before we had got to the lock. I would not let Harris touch it, because he is careless. I had looped it round slowly and cautiously, and tied it up in the middle, and folded it in two, and laid it down gently at the bottom of the boat. Harris had lifted it up scientifically, and had put it into George's hand. George had taken it firmly, and held it away from him, and had begun to unravel it as if he were taking the swaddling clothes off a new-born infant; and, before he had unwound a dozen yards, the thing was more like a badly-made door-mat than anything else.

It is always the same, and the same sort of thing always goes on in connection with it. The man on the bank, who is trying to disentangle it, thinks all the fault lies with the man who rolled it up; and when a man up the river thinks a thing, he says it.

"What have you been trying to do with it, make a fishing-net of it? You've made a nice mess, you have; why couldn't you wind it up



properly, you silly dummy?" he grunts from time to time as he struggles wildly with it, and lays it out flat on the tow-path, and runs round and round it, trying to find the end.

On the other hand, the man who wound it up thinks the whole cause of the muddle[confusion] rests with the man who is trying to unwind it.

"It was all right when you took it!" he exclaims indignantly. "Why don't you think what you are doing? You go about things in such a slap-dash[careless] style. You'd get a scaffolding pole entangled, *you* would!"

And they feel so angry with one another that they would like to hang each other with the thing. Ten minutes go by, and the first man gives a yell and goes mad, and dances on the rope, and tries to pull it straight by seizing hold of the first piece that comes to his hand and hauling[pulling violently] at it. Of course, this only gets it into a tighter tangle than ever. Then the second man climbs out of the boat and comes to help him, and they get in each other's way, and hinder[stop or prevent progress] one another. They both get hold of the same bit of line, and pull at it in opposite directions, and wonder where it is caught. In the end, they do get it clear, and then turn round and find that the boat has drifted off, and is making straight for the weir.

This really happened once to my own knowledge. It was up by Boveney[a village in Buckinghamshire, 27 miles due west of London], one rather windy morning. We were pulling down stream, and, as we came round the bend, we noticed a couple of men on the bank. They were looking at each other with as bewildered and helplessly miserable expression as I have ever witnessed on any human countenance[face] before or since, and they held a long tow-line between them. It was clear that something had happened, so we eased up and asked them what was the matter.

"Why, our boat's gone off!" they replied in an indignant tone. "We just got out to disentangle the tow-line, and when we looked round, it was gone!"

And they seemed hurt at what they evidently regarded as a mean and ungrateful act on the part of the boat.

We found the truant[a wanderer or a student who skips school without permission; in this context, the boat that wandered off] for them half a mile further down, held by some rushes, and we brought it

back to them. I bet they did not give that boat another chance for a week.

I shall never forget the picture of those two men walking up and down the bank with a tow-line, looking for their boat.

One sees a good many funny incidents up the river in connection with towing. One of the most common is the sight of a couple of towers, walking briskly along, deep in an animated[*lively*] discussion, while the man in the boat, a hundred yards behind them, is vainly shrieking to them to stop, and making frantic signs of distress with a scull. Something has gone wrong; the rudder has come off, or the boat-hook has slipped overboard, or his hat has dropped into the water and is floating rapidly down stream.



He calls to them to stop, quite gently and politely at first.

"Hi! stop a minute, will you?" he shouts cheerily. "I've dropped my hat overboard."

Then: "Hi! Tom—Dick! can't you hear?" not quite so affably[*friendly*] this time.

Then: "Hi! Confound *you*, you dunderheaded[*slow-witted*] idiots! Hi! stop! Oh you—!"

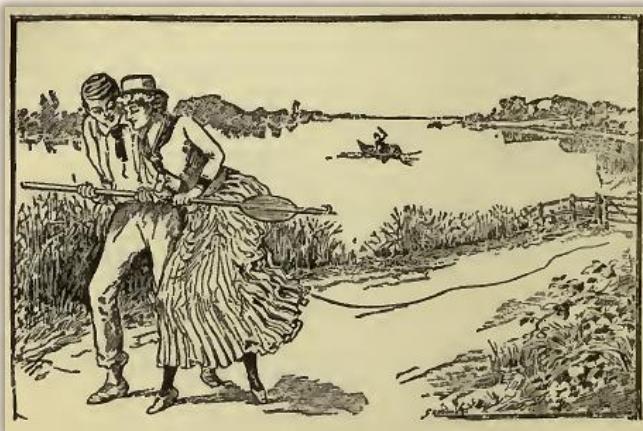
After that he springs up, and dances about, and roars himself red in the face, and curses everything he knows. And the small boys on the bank stop and jeer at him, and pitch stones at him as he is pulled along past them, at the rate of four miles an hour, and can't get out.

Much of this sort of trouble would be saved if those who are towing would keep remembering that they are towing, and give a pretty frequent look round to see how their man is getting on. It is best to let one person tow. When two are doing it, they get chattering, and forget, and the boat itself, offering, as it does, but little resistance, is of no real service in reminding them of the fact.

As an example of how utterly oblivious a pair of towers can be to their work, George told us, later on in the evening, when we were discussing the subject after supper, of a very curious instance.

He and three other men, so he said, were sculling a very heavily laden boat up from Maidenhead[*town in the county of Berkshire, 30 miles west of London*] one evening, and a little above Cookham lock they noticed a fellow and a girl, walking along the tow-path, both deep in an apparently interesting and absorbing conversation. They

were carrying a boat-hook [an iron hook fixed to a pole used for pulling or pushing a boat] between them, and, attached to the boat-hook was a tow-line, which trailed behind them, its end in the water. No boat was near, no boat was in sight. There must have been a boat attached to that tow-line at some time or other, that was certain; but what had become of it, what ghastly fate had overtaken it, and those who had been left in it, was buried in mystery. Whatever the accident may have been, however, it had in no way disturbed the young lady and gentleman, who were towing. They had the boat-hook and they had the line, and that seemed to be that they thought necessary to their work.



George was about to call out and wake them up, but, at that moment, a bright idea flashed across him, and he didn't. He got the hitcher [boat hook] instead, and reached over, and drew in the end of the tow-line; and they made a loop in it, and put it over their mast, and then they tidied up the sculls, and went and sat down in the stern, and lit their pipes.

And that young man and young woman towed those four hulking chaps and a heavy boat up to Marlow.

George said he never saw so much thoughtful sadness concentrated into one glance before, as when, at the lock, that young couple grasped the idea that, for the last two miles, they had been towing the wrong boat. George fancied that, if it had not been for the restraining influence of the sweet woman at his side, the young man might have given way to violent language.

The maiden was the first to recover from her surprise, and, when she did, she clasped her hands, and said, wildly:

"Oh, Henry, then *where* is auntie?"

"Did they ever recover the old lady?" asked Harris.

George replied he did not know.

Another example of the dangerous want[lack] of sympathy between tower[tow-er; person doing the towing] and towed was witnessed by George and myself once up near Walton. It was where the tow-path shelves gently down into the water, and we were camping on the opposite bank, noticing things in general. By-and-by a small boat came in sight, towed through the water at a tremendous pace by a powerful barge horse, on which sat a very small boy. Scattered about the boat, in dreamy and reposeful[calm; laid-back] attitudes, lay five fellows, the man who was steering having a particularly restful appearance.

"I should like to see him pull the wrong line," murmured George, as they passed. And at that precise moment the man did it, and the boat rushed up the bank with a noise like the ripping up of forty thousand linen sheets. Two men, a hamper, and three oars immediately left the boat on the larboard[left] side, and reclined on the bank, and one and a half moments afterwards, two other men disembarked from the starboard[right side], and sat down among boat-hooks and sails and carpet-bags [suitcases made from carpeting] and bottles. The last man went on twenty yards further, and then got out on his head.

This seemed to sort of lighten the boat, and it went on much easier, the small boy shouting at the top of his voice, and urging his steed into a gallop. The fellows sat up and stared at one another. It was some seconds before they realised[realized] what had happened to them, but, when they did, they began to shout lustily[vigorously] for the boy to stop. He, however, was too much occupied with the horse to hear them, and we watched them, flying after him, until the distance hid them from view.



Carpetbag (circa 1860)

I cannot say I was sorry at their mishap. Indeed, I only wish that all the young fools who have their boats towed in this fashion—and plenty do—could meet with similar misfortunes. Besides the risk they run themselves, they become a danger and an annoyance to every other boat they pass. Going at the pace they do, it is impossible for them to get out of anybody else's way, or for anybody else to get out of theirs. Their line gets hitched across your mast, and overturns you, or it catches somebody in the boat, and either throws them into the water, or cuts their face open. The best plan is to stand your ground, and be prepared to keep them off with the butt-end of a mast.

Of all experiences in connection with towing, the most exciting is being towed by girls. It is a sensation that nobody ought to miss. It takes three girls to tow always; two hold the rope, and the other one runs round and round, and giggles. They generally begin by getting themselves tied up. They get the line round their legs, and have to sit down on the path and undo each other, and then they twist it round their necks, and are nearly strangled. They fix it straight, however, at last, and start off at a run, pulling the boat along at quite a dangerous pace. At the end of a hundred yards they are naturally breathless, and suddenly stop, and all sit down on the grass and laugh, and your boat drifts out to mid-stream and turns round, before you know what has happened, or can get hold of a scull. Then they stand up, and are surprised.

"Oh, look!" they say; "he's gone right out into the middle."

They pull on pretty steadily for a bit, after this, and then it all at once occurs to one of them that she will pin up her frock, and they ease up for the purpose, and the boat runs aground.

You jump up, and push it off, and you shout to them not to stop.

"Yes. What's the matter?" they shout back.

"Don't stop," you roar.

"Don't what?"

"Don't stop—go on—go on!"



"Go back, Emily, and see what it is they want," says one; and Emily comes back, and asks what it is.

"What do you want?" she says; "anything happened?"

"No," you reply, "it's all right; only go on, you know—don't stop."

"Why not?"

"Why, we can't steer, if you keep stopping. You must keep some way on the boat."

"Keep some what?"

"Some way—you must keep the boat moving."

"Oh, all right, I'll tell 'em[them]. Are we doing it all right?"

"Oh, yes, very nicely, indeed, only don't stop."

"It doesn't seem difficult at all. I thought it was so hard."

"Oh, no, it's simple enough. You want to keep on steady at it, that's all."

"I see. Give me out my red shawl, it's under the cushion."

You find the shawl, and hand it out, and by this time another one has come back and thinks she will have hers too, and they take Mary's on chance, and Mary does not want it, so they bring it back and have a pocket-comb instead. It is about twenty minutes before they get off again, and, at the next corner, they see a cow, and you have to leave the boat to chivy[nag; harass] the cow out of their way.

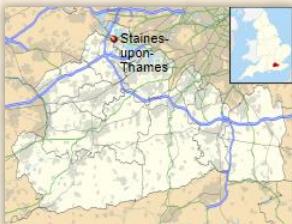
There is never a dull moment in the boat while girls are towing it.

George got the line right after a while, and towed us steadily on to Penton Hook. There we discussed the important question of camping. We had decided to sleep on board that night, and we had either to lay up just about there, or go on past Staines. It seemed early to think about shutting up then, however, with the sun still in the heavens, and we settled to push straight on for Runnymead, three and a half



Penton Hook Lock

miles further, a quiet wooded part of the river, and where there is good shelter.



chat and laugh. Every half-mile you cover seems like two. You can hardly believe you are only where you are, and you are convinced that the map must be wrong; and, when you have trudged[traveled with great effort] along for what seems to you at least ten miles, and still the lock is not in sight, you begin to seriously fear that somebody must have sneaked[stolen] it, and run off with it.

I remember being terribly upset once up the river (in a figurative sense, I mean). I was out with a young lady—cousin on my mother's side—and we were pulling down to Goring. It was rather late, and we were anxious to get in—at least *she* was anxious to get in. It was half-past six when we reached Benson's lock, and dusk was drawing on, and she began to get excited then. She said she must be in to supper. I said it was a thing I felt I wanted to be in at, too; and I drew out a map I had with me to see exactly how far it was. I saw it was just a mile and a half to the next lock—Wallingford—and five on from there to Cleeve.

"Oh, it's all right!" I said. "We'll be through the next lock before seven, and then there is only one more;" and I settled down and pulled steadily away.

We passed the bridge, and soon after that I asked if she saw the lock. She said no, she did not see any lock; and I said, "Oh!" and pulled on. Another five minutes went by, and then I asked her to look again.

"No," she said; "I can't see any signs of a lock."

"You—you are sure you know a lock, when you do see one?" I asked hesitatingly, not wishing to offend her.



The question did offend her, however, and she suggested that I had better look for myself; so I laid down the sculls, and took a view. The river stretched out straight before us in the twilight for about a mile; not a ghost of a lock was to be seen.

"You don't think we have lost our way, do you?" asked my companion.

I did not see how that was possible; though, as I suggested, we might have somehow got into the weir stream, and be making for the falls.

This idea did not comfort her in the least, and she began to cry. She said we should both be drowned, and that it was a judgment on her for coming out with me.

It seemed an excessive punishment, I thought; but my cousin thought not, and hoped it would all soon be over.

I tried to reassure her, and to make light of the whole affair. I said that the fact evidently was that I was not rowing as fast as I fancied I was, but that we should soon reach the lock now; and I pulled on for another mile.

Then I began to get nervous myself. I looked again at the map. There was Wallingford[Chalmore] lock, clearly marked, a mile and a half below Benson's. It was a good, reliable map; and, besides, I recollected the lock myself. I had been through it twice. Where were we? What had happened to us? I began to think it must be all a dream, and that I was really asleep in bed, and should wake up in a minute, and be told it was past ten.

I asked my cousin if she thought it could be a dream, and she replied that she was just about to ask me the same question; and then we both wondered if we were both asleep, and if so, who was the real one that was dreaming, and who was the one that was only a dream; it got quite interesting.

I still went on pulling, however, and still no lock came in sight, and the river grew more and more gloomy and mysterious under the gathering shadows of night, and things seemed to be getting weird and uncanny. I thought of hobgoblins[frightful apparitions] and banshees[female fairies some believe give notice of the death of a family member by issuing a mournful chant], and will-o'-the-wisps[ghostly lights that mislead travelers], and those wicked girls who sit up all night on rocks, and lure people into whirl-pools and things[Jerome probably

means sirens]; and I wished I had been a better man, and knew more hymns; and in the middle of these reflections I heard the blessed strains of "He's got 'em[them] on," played, badly, on a concertina[a musical instrument in which notes are produced by freely vibrating reeds [springs of metal] acted on by a bellows; the player depresses buttons on either side of the instrument to produce the desired notes], and knew that we were saved.

[

The lyrics to the comic song *He's Got 'Em On*, composed by Fred Carlos, appear below:

I hail'd a hansom cab one day,  
To make a little call,  
I dress'd myself up spruce and gay,  
Of course to see my gal;  
When I got to my journey's end,  
The cab-man I did pay,  
On turning round, to my surprise,  
I heard some urchins say:

"He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
Don't he try to do the heavy,  
He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
He's the Don at ev'ry levee.  
He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
Ain't he got a funny chevy,  
I declare he's all there,  
Ain't he got 'em on."

I thought it was my trousers that  
Were not cut in the style,  
Or else my coat look'd seedy, or  
They didn't like my tile[hat];  
My boot are not so bad as that,  
For folks to chaff about,  
So I couldn't understand what made  
These little rascals shout:

"He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
Don't he try to do the heavy,  
He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
He's the Don at ev'ry levee.  
He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,

Ain't he got a funny chevy,  
 I declare he's all there,  
 Ain't he got 'em on."

I push'd aside those youngsters, and  
 I walk'd along the street,  
 And journey'd on to her abode,  
 Where we arranged to meet;  
 I knocked for my young lady, who  
 Lives on the second floor,  
 And the boys they kept on shouting,  
 As she came to the door:

"She's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
 Don't he try to do the heavy,  
 He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
 He's the Don at ev'ry levee.  
 He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
 Ain't he got a funny chevy,  
 I declare he's all there,  
 Ain't he got 'em on."

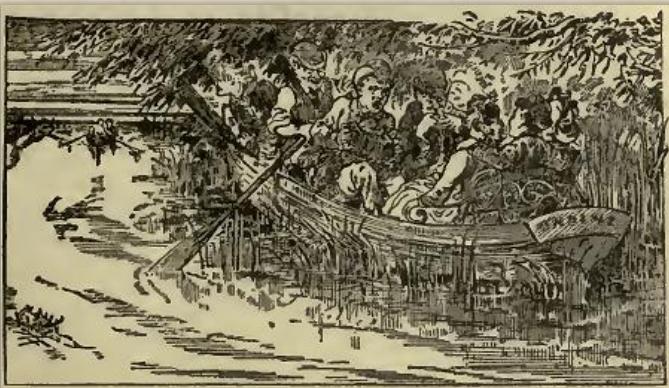
I really could not stand this with  
 The young gal by my side,  
 I shouted for a policeman,  
 And one I soon espied;  
 I told him of the conduct  
 Of these youngsters to my dear,  
 He said "go on, don't notice them,  
 It's a saying they've got here."

"She's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
 Don't he try to do the heavy,  
 He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
 He's the Don at ev'ry levee.  
 He's got 'em on, he's got 'em on,  
 Ain't he got a funny chevy,  
 I declare he's all there,  
 Ain't he got 'em on."

]

I do not admire the tones of a concertina, as a rule; but, oh! how beautiful the music seemed to us both then—far, far more beautiful than the voice of Orpheus[Greek mythological figure, a poet and

musician] or the lute[an early form of guitar] of Apollo[Greek mythological deity[god] known for music, arts, etc.], or anything of that sort could have sounded. Heavenly melody, in our then state of mind, would only have still further harrowed[harassed] us. A soul-moving harmony, correctly performed, we should have taken as a spirit-warning, and have given up all hope. But about the strains of "He's got 'em on," jerked spasmodically[with convulsions or fits], and with involuntary variations, out of a wheezy accordion[Jerome is referring to the concertina], there was something singularly human and reassuring.



The sweet sounds drew nearer, and soon the boat from which they were worked lay alongside us.

It contained a party of provincial[in this context, Jerome means lacking class] 'Arrys and 'Arriets[a term meaning the lower classes; the apostrophe indicates the missing letter H (Harrys and Harriets), usually dropped in speech by the lower classes], out for a moonlight sail. (There was not any moon, but that was not their fault.) I never saw more attractive, lovable people in all my life. I hailed them, and asked if they could tell me the way to Wallingford lock; and I explained that I had been looking for it for the last two hours.

"Wallingford lock!" they answered. "Lor'[Lord] love you, sir, that's been done away with for over a year. There ain't no[is no] Wallingford lock now, sir. You're close to Cleeve now. Blow me tight[an expression of surprise] if 'ere[there] ain't a gentleman been looking for Wallingford lock, Bill!"

I had never thought of that. I wanted to fall upon all their necks and bless them; but the stream was running too strong just there to allow of this, so I had to content myself with mere cold-sounding words of gratitude.

We thanked them over and over again, and we said it was a lovely night, and we wished them a pleasant trip, and, I think, I invited them all to come and spend a week with me, and my cousin said her mother would be so pleased to see them. And we sang the soldiers' chorus out of *Faust*, and got home in time for supper, after all.

[

Faust is a five-act opera composed by Charles Gounod loosely based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's tragic play *Faust*. The English lyrics to the *Soldiers' Chorus* appears below. You can listen to this on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H\\_rOFJK4SWA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_rOFJK4SWA).

*Chorus:* Glory and love to the men of old!

Their sons may copy their virtues bold;  
Courage in heart and a sword in hand,  
Both ready to fight and ready to die for Fatherland!

Who needs bidding to dare by a trumpet blown?  
Who lacks pity to spare when the field is won?  
Who would fly from a foe if alone or lost?  
And boast he was true, as coward might do when peril is past?

*Chorus:* Glory and love to the men of old!

Their sons may copy their virtues bold.  
Courage in heart and a sword in hand,  
All ready to fight for Fatherland.

Now to home again we come,  
the long and fiery strife of battle over;  
Rest is pleasant after toil as hard as ours beneath a stranger sun  
Many a maiden fair is waiting here  
to greet her truant soldier lover,

And many a heart will fail and brow  
grow pale to hear the tale of cruel peril he has run.  
We are at home.  
We are at home.  
We are at home.

*Chorus:* Glory and love to the men of old;  
Their sons may copy their virtues bold!  
Courage in heart and a sword in hand,  
All ready to fight for Fatherland!  
All ready to fight, or ready to die for Fatherland!

]



William Leighton Leitch (Scottish, 1804-1883)

*On the Thames*, n.d.

Pen and brown ink on ivory wove paper, laid down on board

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER X

*Our first night.—Under canvas.—An appeal for help.—Contrariness of tea-kettles, how to overcome.—Supper.—How to feel virtuous.—Wanted! a comfortably-appointed, well-drained desert island, neighbourhood of South Pacific Ocean preferred.—Funny thing that happened to George's father.—a restless night.*

arris and I began to think that Bell Weir lock must have been done away with after the same manner. George had towed us up to Staines, and we had taken the boat from there, and it seemed that we were dragging fifty tons after us, and were walking forty miles. It was half-past seven when we were through, and we all got in, and sculled up close to the left bank, looking out for a spot to haul up in.

We had originally intended to go on to Magna Charta[Carta] Island, a sweetly pretty part of the river, where it winds through a soft, green valley, and to camp in one of the many picturesque inlets to be found round that tiny shore. But, somehow, we did not feel that we yearned for the picturesque nearly so much now as we had earlier in the day. A bit of water between a coal-barge and a gas-works would have quite satisfied us for that night. We did not want scenery. We wanted to have our supper and go to bed. However, we did pull up to the point—"Picnic Point," it is called—and dropped into a very pleasant nook under a great elm-tree, to the spreading roots of which we fastened the boat.



Then we thought we were going to have supper (we had dispensed with tea, so as to save time), but George said no; that we had better get the canvas up first, before it got quite dark, and while we could see what we were doing. Then, he said, all our work would be done, and we could sit down to eat with an easy mind.



Magna Charta Island (Artist: Henry B. Wimbush)

That canvas wanted more putting up than I think any of us had bargained for. It looked so simple in the abstract [probably instruction booklet]. You took five iron arches, like gigantic croquet hoops, and fitted them up over the boat, and then stretched the canvas over them, and fastened it down: it would take quite ten minutes, we thought.

That was an under-estimate.

We took up the hoops, and began to drop them into the sockets placed for them. You would not imagine this to be dangerous work; but, looking back now, the wonder to me is that any of us are alive to tell the tale. They were not hoops, they were demons. First they would not fit into their sockets at all, and we had to jump on them, and kick them, and hammer at them with the boat-hook; and, when they were in, it turned out that they were the wrong hoops for those particular sockets, and they had to come out again.

But they would not come out, until two of us had gone and struggled with them for five minutes, when they would jump up suddenly, and try and throw us into the water and drown us. They had hinges in the middle, and, when we were not looking, they nipped us with these hinges in delicate parts of the body; and, while

we were wrestling with one side of the hoop, and endeavoring to persuade it to do its duty, the other side would come behind us in a cowardly manner, and hit us over the head.

We got them fixed at last, and then all that was to be done was to arrange the covering over them. George unrolled it, and fastened one end over the nose of the boat. Harris stood in the middle to take it from George and roll it on to me, and I kept by the stern to receive it. It was a long time coming down to me. George did his part all right, but it was new work to Harris, and he bungled [*mismanged*] it.

How he managed it I do not know, he could not explain himself; but by some mysterious process or other he succeeded, after ten minutes of superhuman effort, in getting himself completely rolled up in it. He was so firmly wrapped round and tucked in and folded over, that he could not get out. He, of course, made frantic struggles for freedom—the birthright of every Englishman,—and, in doing so (I learned this afterwards), knocked over George; and then George, swearing at Harris, began to struggle too, and got *himself* entangled and rolled up.

I knew nothing about all this at the time. I did not understand the business at all myself. I had been told to stand where I was, and wait till the canvas came to me, and Montmorency and I stood there and waited, both as good as gold [*well-behaved*].

We could see the canvas being violently jerked and tossed about, pretty considerably; but we supposed this was part of the method, and did not interfere.

We also heard much smothered language coming from underneath it, and we guessed that they were finding the job rather troublesome, and concluded that we would wait until

things had got a little simpler before we joined in.

We waited some time, but matters seemed to get only more and more involved, until, at last, George's head came wriggling out over the side of the boat, and spoke up.

It said:



"Give us a hand here, can't you, you cuckoo; standing there like a stuffed mummy, when you see we are both being suffocated, you dummy!"

I never could withstand an appeal for help, so I went and undid them; not before it was time, either, for Harris was nearly black in the face [purple-faced due to over-exertion].

It took us half an hour's hard labour [labor], after that, before it was properly up, and then we cleared the decks [removed obstacles in the way; prepared for action], and got out supper. We put the kettle on to boil, up in the nose of the boat, and went down to the stern and pretended to take no notice of it, but set to work to get the other things out.

That is the only way to get a kettle to boil up the river. If it sees that you are waiting for it and are anxious, it will never even sing. You have to go away and begin your meal, as if you were not going to have any tea at all. You must not even look round at it. Then you will soon hear it sputtering [to throw out moisture in scattered drops] away, mad to be made into tea.

It is a good plan, too, if you are in a great hurry, to talk very loudly to each other about how you don't need any tea, and are not going to have any. You get near the kettle, so that it can overhear you, and then you shout out, "I don't want any tea; do you, George?" to which George shouts back, "Oh, no, I don't like tea; we'll have lemonade instead—tea's so indigestible." Upon which the kettle boils over, and puts the stove out.

We adopted this harmless bit of trickery, and the result was that, by the time everything else was ready, the tea was waiting. Then we lit the lantern, and squatted down to supper.

We wanted that supper.

For five-and-thirty minutes not a sound was heard throughout the length and breadth of that boat, save the clank of cutlery and crockery, and the steady grinding of four sets of molars. At the end of five-and-thirty minutes, Harris said, "Ah!" and took his left leg out from under him and put his right one there instead.

Five minutes afterwards, George said, "Ah!" too, and threw his plate out on the bank; and, three minutes later than that, Montmorency gave the first sign of contentment he had exhibited since we had started, and rolled over on his side, and spread his legs

out; and then I said, "Ah!" and bent my head back, and bumped it against one of the hoops, but I did not mind it. I did not even swear.

How good one feels when one is full—how satisfied with ourselves and with the world! People who have tried it, tell me that a clear conscience makes you very happy and contented; but a full stomach does the business quite as well, and is cheaper, and more easily obtained. One feels so forgiving and generous after a substantial and well-digested meal—so noble-minded, so kindly-hearted.

It is very strange, this domination[absolute control] of our intellect by our digestive organs. We cannot work, we cannot think, unless our stomach wills so. It dictates to us our emotions, our passions. After eggs and bacon, it says, "Work!" After beefsteak[steak] and porter[dark ale brewed from malt], it says, "Sleep!" After a cup of tea (two spoonsful for each cup, and don't let it stand more than three minutes), it says to the brain, "Now, rise, and show your strength. Be eloquent, and deep, and tender; see, with a clear eye, into Nature and into life; spread your white wings of quivering thought, and soar, a god-like spirit, over the whirling world beneath you, up through long lanes of flaming stars to the gates of eternity!"

After hot muffins, it says, "Be dull and soulless, like a beast of the field—a brainless animal, with listless eye, unlit by any ray of fancy, or of hope, or fear, or love, or life." And after brandy, taken in sufficient quantity, it says, "Now, come, fool, grin and tumble, that your fellow-men may laugh—drivel[foolish talk] in folly, and splutter[spit out] in senseless sounds, and show what a helpless ninny[simpleton] is poor man whose wit and will are drowned, like kittens, side by side, in half an inch of alcohol."

We are but the veriest[utmost], sorriest slaves of our stomach. Reach not after morality and righteousness, my friends; watch vigilantly your stomach, and diet it with care and judgment. Then virtue and contentment will come and reign within your heart, unsought by any effort of your own; and you will be a good citizen, a loving husband, and a tender father—a noble, pious man.

Before our supper, Harris and George and I were quarrelsome and snappy and ill-tempered; after our supper, we sat and beamed on one another, and we beamed upon the dog, too. We loved each other, we loved everybody. Harris, in moving about, trod on George's corn. Had this happened before supper, George would

have expressed wishes and desires concerning Harris's fate in this world and the next that would have made a thoughtful man shudder.

As it was, he said: "Steady, old man; 'ware wheat [beware of the wheat; an exclamation indicating not to step on the wheat in a field as you may damage it; in this context, George is minimizing the situation]."

And Harris, instead of merely observing, in his most unpleasant tones, that a fellow could hardly help treading on some bit of George's foot, if he had to move about at all within ten yards of where George was sitting, suggesting that George never ought to come into an ordinary sized boat with feet that length, and advising him to hang them over the side, as he would have done before supper, now said: "Oh, I'm so sorry, old chap; I hope I haven't hurt you."

And George said: "Not at all;" that it was his fault; and Harris said no, it was his.

It was quite pretty to hear them.

We lit our pipes, and sat, looking out on the quiet night, and talked.

George said why could not we be always like this—away from the world, with its sin and temptation, leading sober, peaceful lives, and doing good. I said it was the sort of thing I had often longed for myself; and we discussed the possibility of our going away, we four, to some handy, well-fitted desert island, and living there in the woods.

Harris said that the danger about desert islands, as far as he had heard, was that they were so damp: but George said no, not if properly drained.

And then we got on to drains, and that put George in mind of a very funny thing that happened to his father once. He said his father was travelling with another fellow through Wales, and, one night, they stopped at a little inn, where there were some other fellows, and they joined the other fellows, and spent the evening with them.

They had a very jolly evening, and sat up late, and, by the time they came to go to bed, they (this was when George's father was a very young man) were slightly jolly, too. They (George's father and



George's father's friend) were to sleep in the same room, but in different beds. They took the candle, and went up. The candle lurched up against the wall when they got into the room, and went out, and they had to undress and grope into bed in the dark. This they did; but, instead of getting into separate beds, as they thought they were doing, they both climbed into the same one without knowing it—one getting in with his head at the top, and the other crawling in from the opposite side of the compass, and lying with his feet on the pillow.

There was silence for a moment, and then George's father said:

"Joe!"

"What's the matter, Tom?" replied Joe's voice from the other end of the bed.

"Why, there's a man in my bed," said George's father; "here's his feet on my pillow."

"Well, it's an extraordinary thing, Tom," answered the other; "but I'm blest[blessed] if there isn't a man in my bed, too!"

"What are you going to do?" asked George's father.

"Well, I'm going to chuck him out," replied Joe.

"So am I," said George's father, valiantly[courageously].

There was a brief struggle, followed by two heavy bumps on the floor, and then a rather doleful[full of grief] voice said:

"I say, Tom!"

"Yes!"

"How have you got on?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, my man's chucked *me* out."

"So's mine! I say, I don't think much of this inn, do you?"

"What was the name of that inn?" said Harris.

"The Pig and Whistle," said George. "Why?"

"Ah, no, then it isn't the same," replied Harris.

"What do you mean?" queried George.

"Why it's so curious," murmured Harris, "but precisely that very same thing happened to *my* father once at a country inn. I've often heard him tell the tale. I thought it might have been the same inn."

We turned in at ten that night, and I thought I should sleep well, being tired; but I didn't. As a rule, I undress and put my head on the pillow, and then somebody bangs at the door, and says it is half-past eight: but, to-night, everything seemed against me; the novelty of it all, the hardness of the boat, the cramped position (I was lying with my feet under one seat, and my head on another), the sound of the lapping water round the boat, and the wind among the branches, kept me restless and disturbed.

I did get to sleep for a few hours, and then some part of the boat which seemed to have grown up in the night—for it certainly was not there when we started, and it had disappeared by the morning—kept digging into my spine. I slept through it for a while, dreaming that I had swallowed a sovereign[a gold coin worth 20 shillings], and that they were cutting a hole in my back with a gimlet[a small tool for boring holes by turning it with the hand], so as to try and get it out. I thought it very unkind of them, and I told them I would owe them the money, and they should have it at the end of the month. But they would not hear of that, and said it would be much better if they had it then, because otherwise the interest would accumulate so. I got quite cross with them after a bit, and told them what I thought of them, and then they gave the gimlet such an excruciating wrench that I woke up.

The boat seemed stuffy, and my head ached; so I thought I would step out into the cool night air. I slipped on what clothes I could find about—some of my own, and some of George's and Harris's—and crept under the canvas on to the bank.

It was a glorious night. The moon had sunk, and left the quiet earth alone with the stars. It seemed as if, in the silence and the hush, while we her children slept, they were talking with her, their sister—conversing of mighty mysteries in voices too vast and deep for childish human ears to catch the sound.

They awe us, these strange stars, so cold, so clear. We are as children whose small feet have strayed into some dim-lit temple of the god they have been taught to worship but know not; and, standing where the echoing dome spans the long vista of the shadowy light, glance up, half hoping, half afraid to see some awful vision hovering there.

And yet it seems so full of comfort and of strength, the night. In its great presence, our small sorrows creep away, ashamed. The day

has been so full of fret and care, and our hearts have been so full of evil and of bitter thoughts, and the world has seemed so hard and wrong to us. Then Night, like some great loving mother, gently lays her hand upon our fevered head, and turns our little tear-stained faces up to hers, and smiles; and, though she does not speak, we know what she would say, and lay our hot flushed cheek against her bosom, and the pain is gone.



Sorrow and Song by Edmund Leighton (1893)

Sometimes, our pain is very deep and real, and we stand before her very silent, because there is no language for our pain, only a moan. Night's heart is full of pity for us: she cannot ease our aching; she takes our hand in hers, and the little world grows very small and very far away beneath us, and, borne[carried] on her dark wings, we pass for a moment into a mightier Presence than her own, and in the wondrous light of that great Presence, all human life lies like a book before us, and we know that Pain and Sorrow are but the angels of God.

Only those who have worn the crown of suffering can look upon that wondrous light; and they, when they return, may not speak of it, or tell the mystery they know.

Once upon a time, through a strange country, there rode some goodly knights, and their path lay by a deep wood, where tangled briars[plants with thorny stems] grew very thick and strong, and tore the flesh of them that lost their way therein[in that place]. And the

leaves of the trees that grew in the wood were very dark and thick, so that no ray of light came through the branches to lighten the gloom and sadness.

And, as they passed by that dark wood, one knight of those that rode, missing his comrades, wandered far away, and returned to them no more; and they, sorely grieving, rode on without him, mourning him as one dead.

Now, when they reached the fair castle towards which they had been journeying, they stayed there many days, and made merry; and one night, as they sat in cheerful ease around the logs that burned in the great hall, and drank a loving measure, there came the comrade they had lost, and greeted them. His clothes were ragged, like a beggar's, and many sad wounds were on his sweet flesh, but upon his face there shone a great radiance of deep joy.

And they questioned him, asking him what had befallen [happened to] him: and he told them how in the dark wood he had lost his way, and had wandered many days and nights, till, torn and bleeding, he had lain him down to die.



Then, when he was nigh [near] unto death, lo! through the savage gloom there came to him a stately maiden, and took him by the hand and led him on through devious paths, unknown to any man, until upon the darkness of the wood there dawned a light such as the light of day was unto but as a little lamp unto the sun; and, in that wondrous light, our way-worn [worn out by travel] knight saw as in a dream a vision, and so glorious, so fair the vision seemed, that of his

bleeding wounds he thought no more, but stood as one entranced, whose joy is deep as is the sea, whereof no man can tell the depth.

And the vision faded, and the knight, kneeling upon the ground, thanked the good saint who into that sad wood had strayed his steps, so he had seen the vision that lay there hid.

And the name of the dark forest was Sorrow; but of the vision that the good knight saw therein we may not speak nor tell.



Knight and Maiden by George Frederic Watts (circa 1900)



Frank Duveneck (American, 1848-1919)

*On the Thames*, 1880

Etching in black on buff wove paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XI

*How George, once upon a time, got up early in the morning.—George, Harris, and Montmorency do not like the look of the cold water.—Heroism and determination on the part of J.—George and his shirt: story with a moral.—Harris as cook.—Historical retrospect, specially inserted for the use of schools.*

 woke at six the next morning; and found George awake too. We both turned round, and tried to go to sleep again, but we could not. Had there been any particular reason why we should not have gone to sleep again, but have got up and dressed then and there, we should have dropped off while we were looking at our watches, and have slept till ten. As there was no earthly necessity for our getting up under another two hours at the very least, and our getting up at that time was an utter absurdity, it was only in keeping with the natural cussedness[trouble] of things in general that we should both feel that lying down for five minutes more would be death to us.

George said that the same kind of thing, only worse, had happened to him some eighteen months ago, when he was lodging by himself in the house of a certain Mrs. Gippings. He said his watch went wrong one evening, and stopped at a quarter-past eight. He did not know this at the time because, for some reason or other, he forgot to wind it up when he went to bed (an unusual occurrence with him), and hung it up over his pillow without ever looking at the thing.

It was in the winter when this happened, very near the shortest day, and a week of fog into the bargain, so the fact that it was still very dark when George woke in the morning was no guide to him as to the time. He reached up, and hauled down his watch. It was a quarter-past eight.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us![spoken by Hamlet at the arrival of the ghost of Hamlet's dead, but still well-dressed, father, from the play *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* by William Shakespeare]" exclaimed George; "and here have I got to be in the City by nine. Why didn't somebody call me? Oh, this is a shame!" And he flung the watch down, and sprang out of bed, and had a cold bath, and washed himself, and dressed himself, and shaved himself in cold water because there was not time to wait for the hot, and then rushed and had another look at the watch.

Whether the shaking it had received in being thrown down on the bed had started it, or how it was, George could not say, but certain it was that from a quarter-past eight it had begun to go, and now pointed to twenty minutes to nine.

George snatched it up, and rushed downstairs. In the sitting-room, all was dark and silent: there was no fire, no breakfast. George said it was a wicked shame of Mrs. G., and he made up his mind to tell her what he thought of her when he came home in the evening. Then he dashed[hastily put] on his greatcoat and hat, and, seizing his umbrella, made for the front door. The door was not even unbolted. George anathematized[cursed] Mrs. G. for a lazy old woman, and thought it was very strange that people could not get up at a decent, respectable time, unlocked and unbolted the door, and ran out.

He ran hard for a quarter of a mile, and at the end of that distance it began to be borne in upon him as a strange and curious thing that there were so few people about, and that there were no shops open. It was certainly a very dark and foggy morning, but still it seemed an unusual course to stop all business on that account. *He* had to go to business: why should other people stop in bed merely because it was dark and foggy!

At length he reached Holborn. Not a shutter was down! not a bus was about! There were three men in sight, one of whom was a



policeman; a market-cart full of cabbages, and a dilapidated[run down] looking cab. George pulled out his watch and looked at it: it was five minutes to nine! He stood still and counted his pulse. He stooped down and felt his legs. Then, with his watch still in his hand, he went up to the policeman, and asked him if he knew what the time was.

"What's the time?" said the man, eyeing George up and down with evident suspicion; "why, if you listen you will hear it strike."

George listened, and a neighbouring clock immediately obliged.

"But it's only gone three!" said George in an injured tone, when it had finished.

"Well, and how many did you want it to go?" replied the constable.

"Why, nine," said George, showing his watch.

"Do you know where you live?" said the guardian of public order, severely.

George thought, and gave the address.

"Oh! that's where it is, is it?" replied the man; "well, you take my advice and go there quietly, and take that watch of yours with you; and don't let's have any more of it."

And George went home again, musing as he walked along, and let himself in.

At first, when he got in, he determined to undress and go to bed again; but when he thought of the re-dressing and re-washing, and the having of another bath, he determined he would not, but would sit up and go to sleep in the easy-chair.

But he could not get to sleep: he never felt more wakeful in his life; so he lit the lamp and got out the chess-board, and played himself a game of chess. But even that did not enliven[excite] him: it seemed slow somehow; so he gave chess up and tried to read. He did not seem able to take any sort of interest in reading either, so he put on his coat again and went out for a walk.



It was horribly lonesome and dismal, and all the policemen he met regarded him with undisguised suspicion, and turned their lanterns[in the days before battery-powered flashlights, lanterns containing candles, oil, fireflies, etc. were used] on him and followed him about, and this had such an effect upon him at last that he began to feel as if he really had done something, and he got to slinking[sneaking] down the by-streets and hiding in dark doorways when he heard the regulation flip-flop[policeman's footsteps] approaching.

Of course, this conduct made the force[police] only more distrustful of him than ever, and they would come and rout[drive] him out and ask him what he was doing there; and when he answered, "Nothing," he had merely come out for a stroll (it was then four o'clock in the morning), they looked as though they did not believe him, and two plain-clothes constables came home with him to see if he really did live where he had said he did. They saw him go in with his key, and then they took up a position opposite and watched the house.

He thought he would light the fire when he got inside, and make himself some breakfast, just to pass away the time; but he did not seem able to handle anything from a scuttleful of coals[a scuttle is a vessel for holding coal] to a teaspoon without dropping it or falling over it, and making such a noise that he was in mortal fear that it would wake Mrs. G. up, and that she would think it was burglars and open the window and call "Police!" and then these two detectives would rush in and handcuff him, and march him off to the police court.

He was in a morbidly[unhealthy; indicative of disease] nervous state by this time, and he pictured the trial, and his trying to explain the circumstances to the jury, and nobody believing him, and his being sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude[imprisonment], and his mother dying of a broken heart. So he gave up trying to get breakfast, and wrapped himself up in his overcoat and sat in the easy-chair till Mrs. G came down at half-past seven.

He said he had never got up too early since that morning: it had been such a warning to him.

We had been sitting huddled up in our rugs while George had been telling me this true story, and on his finishing it I set to work to wake up Harris with a scull. The third prod did it: and he turned

over on the other side, and said he would be down in a minute, and that he would have his lace-up boots. We soon let him know where he was, however, by the aid of the hitcher, and he sat up suddenly, sending Montmorency, who had been sleeping the sleep of the just right on the middle of his chest, sprawling across the boat.

Then we pulled up the canvas, and all four of us poked our heads out over the off-side, and looked down at the water and shivered. The idea, overnight, had been that we should get up early in the morning, fling off our rugs and shawls, and, throwing back the canvas, spring into the river with a joyous shout, and revel in a long delicious swim. Somehow, now the morning had come, the notion seemed less tempting. The water looked damp and chilly: the wind felt cold.

"Well, who's going to be first in?" said Harris at last.

There was no rush for precedence[priority]. George settled the matter so far as he was concerned by retiring into the boat and pulling on his socks. Montmorency gave vent to an involuntary howl, as if merely thinking of the thing had given him the horrors; and Harris said it would be so difficult to get into the boat again, and went back and sorted out his trousers.

I did not altogether like to give in, though I did not relish the plunge. There might be snags[sharp projections, as on a tree where branches have been cut off] about, or weeds, I thought. I meant to compromise matters by going down to the edge and just throwing the water over myself; so I took a towel and crept out on the bank and wormed my way along on to the branch of a tree that dipped down into the water.

It was bitterly cold. The wind cut like a knife. I thought I would not throw the water over myself after all. I would go back into the boat and dress; and I turned to do so; and, as I turned, the silly branch gave way, and I and the towel went in together with a tremendous splash, and I was out mid-stream with a gallon of Thames water inside me before I knew what had



happened.

"By Jove! old J.'s gone in," I heard Harris say, as I came blowing to the surface. "I didn't think he'd have the pluck to do it. Did you?"

"Is it all right?" sung out George.

"Lovely," I spluttered back. "You are duffers[oafs] not to come in. I wouldn't have missed this for worlds. Why won't you try it? It only wants a little determination."

But I could not persuade them.

Rather an amusing thing happened while dressing that morning. I was very cold when I got back into the boat, and, in my hurry to get my shirt on, I accidentally jerked it[threw it abruptly] into the water. It made me awfully wild[angry], especially as George burst out laughing. I could not see anything to laugh at, and I told George so, and he only laughed the more. I never saw a man laugh so much. I quite lost my temper with him at last, and I pointed out to him what a drivelling maniac of an imbecile idiot he was; but he only roared the louder. And then, just as I was landing the shirt[pulling it from the water into the boat], I noticed that it was not my shirt at all, but George's, which I had mistaken for mine; whereupon the humour of the thing struck me for the first time, and I began to laugh. And the more I looked from George's wet shirt to George, roaring with laughter, the more I was amused, and I laughed so much that I had to let the shirt fall back into the water again.

"Ar'n't[Aren't] you—you going to get it out?" said George, between his shrieks.

I could not answer him at all for a while, I was laughing so, but, at last, between my peals[here, loud sounds of laughter] I managed to jerk out[to say]:

"It isn't my shirt—it's *yours!*"

I never saw a man's face change from lively to severe so suddenly in all my life before.

"What!" he yelled, springing up. "You silly cuckoo! Why can't you be more careful what you're doing? Why the deuce[used for emphasis; similar to heck] don't you go and dress on the bank? You're not fit to be in a boat, you're not. Gimme the hitcher."

I tried to make him see the fun of the thing, but he could not. George is very dense at seeing a joke sometimes.

Harris proposed that we should have scrambled eggs for breakfast. He said he would cook them. It seemed, from his account, that he was very good at doing scrambled eggs. He often did them at picnics and when out on yachts. He was quite famous for them. People who had once tasted his scrambled eggs, so we gathered from his conversation, never cared for any other food afterwards, but pined away[yearned for them] and died when they could not get them.

It made our mouths water to hear him talk about the things, and we handed him out the stove and the frying-pan and all the eggs that had not smashed and gone over everything in the hamper, and begged him to begin.

He had some trouble in breaking the eggs—or rather not so much trouble in breaking them exactly as in getting them into the frying-pan when broken, and keeping them off his trousers, and preventing them from running up his sleeve; but he fixed some half-a-dozen into the pan at last, and then squatted down by the side of the stove and chivied[moved] them about with a fork.

It seemed harassing work, so far as George and I could judge. Whenever he went near the pan he burned himself, and then he would drop everything and dance round the stove, flicking his fingers about and cursing the things. Indeed, every time George and I looked round at him he was sure to be performing this feat. We thought at first that it was a necessary part of the culinary arrangements.

We did not know what scrambled eggs were, and we fancied that it must be some Red Indian or Sandwich Islands[Jerome is indicating foreign] sort of dish that required dances and incantations[magic spells] for its proper cooking. Montmorency went and put his nose over it once, and the fat spluttered up and scalded him, and then *he* began dancing and cursing. Altogether it was one of the most interesting and exciting operations I have ever witnessed. George and I were both quite sorry when it was over.

The result was not altogether the success that Harris had anticipated. There seemed so little to show for the business. Six eggs had gone into the frying-pan, and all that came out was a teaspoonful of burnt and unappetizing looking mess.

Harris said it was the fault of the frying-pan, and thought it would have gone better if we had had a fish-kettle[an oval-shaped pot used to

cook a whole fish; slightly similar in design to a Dutch oven] and a gas-stove; and we decided not to attempt the dish again until we had those aids to housekeeping by us.

The sun had got more powerful by the time we had finished breakfast, and the wind had dropped, and it was as lovely a morning as one could desire. Little was in sight to remind us of the nineteenth century; and, as we looked out upon the river in the morning sunlight, we could almost fancy that the centuries between us and that ever-to-be-famous June morning of 1215[the signing of the Magna Carta on 15 June 1215] had been drawn aside, and that we, English yeomen's sons[yeoman indicates a social class immediately below a gentleman; Jerome may mean sons of commoners here] in homespun[made at home] cloth, with dirk[dagger] at belt, were waiting there to witness the writing of that stupendous page of history, the meaning whereof was to be translated to the common people some four hundred and odd years later by one Oliver Cromwell[English statesman, 25 April 1599 – 3 September 1658], who had deeply studied it.

It is a fine summer morning—sunny, soft, and still. But through the air there runs a thrill of coming stir. King John[one of the signers of the Magna Carta; 24 December 1166 – 19 October 1216] has slept at Duncroft Hall, and all the day before the little town of Staines has echoed to the clang of armed men, and the clatter of great horses over its rough stones, and the shouts of captains, and the grim oaths[curses] and surly[uncivil] jests[jokes] of bearded bowmen

[men who row the foremost or bow oar in a boat], billmen[soldiers armed with a bill or hooked axe], pikemen[men armed with pikes], and strange-speaking foreign spearmen[men armed with ...uh...spears].

Gay-cloaked[fancifully clothed] companies of knights and squires [knights' attendants; in societal ranking, above gentleman, but below knight] have ridden in, all travel-stained and dusty. And all the evening long the timid townsmen's doors have had to be quick opened to let in rough



Oliver Cromwell  
(Samuel Cooper 1656)

groups of soldiers, for whom there must be found both board[meals] and lodging[temporary place to live/sleep], and the best of both, or woe betide[grief/misery befall] the house and all within; for the sword is judge and jury, plaintiff[one who commences and carries on a lawsuit against another] and executioner, in these tempestuous[turbulent] times, and pays for what it takes by sparing those from whom it takes it, if it pleases it to do so.

Round the camp-fire in the market-place gather still more of the Barons' troops[a baron is an aristocrat ranked above lord or knight but below viscount or count], and eat and drink deep[much], and bellow forth roystering[roistering; noisy, bragging] drinking songs, and gamble and quarrel as the evening grows and deepens into night. The firelight sheds quaint shadows on their piled-up arms and on their uncouth forms. The children of the town steal round to watch them, wondering; and brawny country wenches[Jerome probably means young women, but the word can also mean strumpet[prostitute]], laughing, draw near to bandy[verbally banter back-and-forth] ale-house jest[jokes] and jibe[playful taunts] with the swaggering troopers, so unlike the village swains[youth], who, now despised, stand apart behind, with vacant grins upon their broad, peering faces. And out from the fields around, glitter the faint lights of more distant camps, as here some great lord's followers lie mustered[assembled], and there false John's French mercenaries[soldiers hired into service] hover like crouching wolves without the town.

And so, with sentinel[soldiers on guard to observe the approach of danger] in each dark street, and twinkling watch-fires on each height around, the night has worn away, and over this fair valley of old Thame[a market town deriving its name from the River Thame, a tributary of the River Thames] has broken the morning of the great day that is to close so big with the fate of ages yet unborn.

Ever since grey dawn, in the lower of the two islands[Magna Charta Island; the upper of the two is Pats Croft Eyot], just above where we are standing, there has been great clamour, and the sound of many workmen. The great pavilion brought there yester eve[last night] is being raised, and carpenters are busy nailing tiers of seats, while 'prentices[apprentices; one learning a trade/art from another] from London town are there with many-coloured stuffs and silks and cloth of gold and silver.

And now, lo! down upon the road that winds along the river's bank from Staines there come towards us, laughing and talking together in deep guttural[throaty] bass, a half-a-score[ten; a score is equal to twenty] of stalwart[brave] halbertmen[men carrying halberds; a halberd is a weapon consisting of an axe and heavy dagger fixed on a pole; the letter "t" appears probably because the word derives from the Old German word *helmbarte*(pole + axe)]—Barons' men, these—and halt at a hundred yards or so above us, on the other bank, and lean upon their arms, and wait.

And so, from hour to hour, march up along the road ever fresh groups and bands of armed men, their casques[helmets] and breastplates flashing back the long low lines of morning sunlight, until, as far as eye can reach, the way seems thick with glittering steel and prancing steeds. And shouting horsemen are galloping from group to group, and little banners are fluttering lazily in the warm breeze, and every now and then there is a deeper stir as the ranks make way on either side, and some great Baron on his war-horse, with his guard of squires around him, passes along to take his station at the head of his serfs[slaves bound to a piece of land and sold with it; generally, serfs work the land as farmers] and vassals[attendants who manage the land for land-owning noblemen].

And up the slope of Cooper's Hill, just opposite, are gathered the wondering rustics[country folk] and curious townsfolk, who have run from Staines, and none are quite sure what the bustle[commotion] is about, but each one has a different version of the great event that they have come to see; and some say that much good to all the people will come from this day's work; but the old men shake their heads, for they have heard such tales before.

And all the river down to Staines is dotted with small craft and boats and tiny coracles[fishing boats made of skins or oil-cloth stretched on wicker-work]—which last are growing out of favour now, and are used only by the poorer folk. Over the rapids, where in after years trim[in a few short years] Bell Weir lock will stand, they have been forced or dragged by their sturdy rowers, and now are crowding up as near as they dare come to the great covered barges, which lie in readiness to bear King John to where the fateful Charter waits his signing.

It is noon, and we and all the people have been waiting patient for many an hour, and the rumour has run round that slippery John has

again escaped from the Barons' grasp, and has stolen away from Duncroft Hall with his mercenaries at his heels, and will soon be doing other work than signing charters for his people's liberty.

Not so! This time the grip upon him has been one of iron, and he has slid and wriggled in vain. Far down the road a little cloud of dust has risen, and draws nearer and grows larger, and the pattering of many hoofs grows louder, and in and out between the scattered groups of drawn-up men, there pushes on its way a brilliant cavalcade[*a line of persons on horseback*] of gay-dressed lords and knights. And front and rear, and either flank[*side*], there ride the yeomen of the Barons, and in the midst King John.

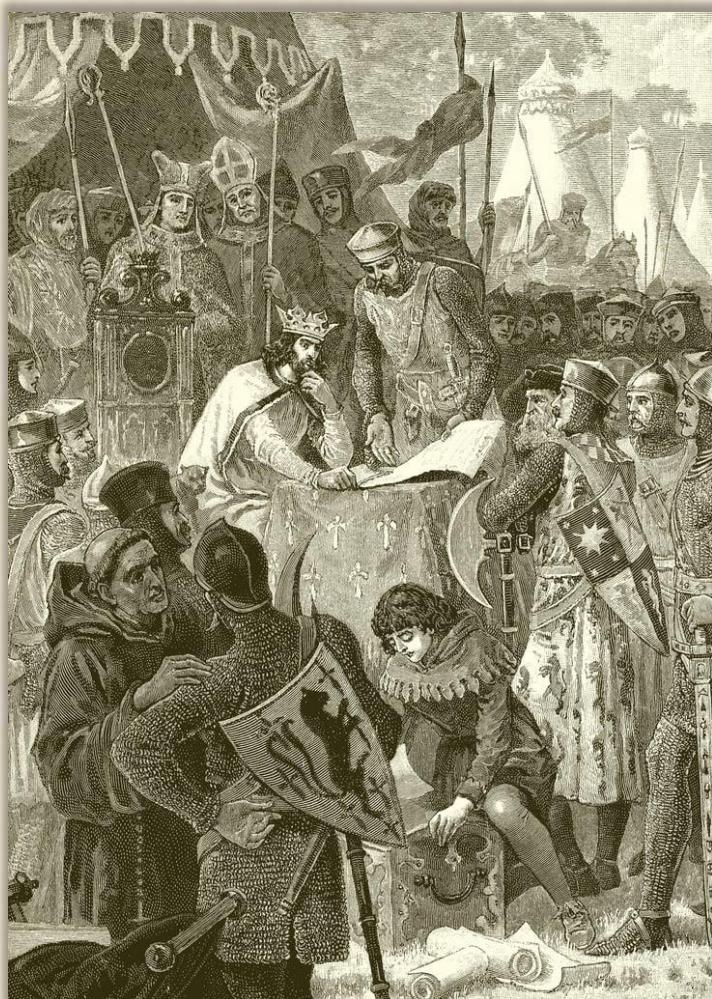
He rides to where the barges lie in readiness, and the great Barons step forth from their ranks to meet him. He greets them with a smile and laugh, and pleasant honeyed words, as though it were some feast in his honour to which he had been invited. But as he rises to dismount, he casts one hurried glance from his own French mercenaries drawn up in the rear to the grim ranks of the Barons' men that hem him in.

Is it too late? One fierce blow at the unsuspecting horseman at his side, one cry to his French troops, one desperate charge upon the unready lines before him, and these rebellious Barons might rue[*regret*] the day they dared to thwart his plans! A bolder hand might have turned the game even at that point. Had it been a Richard there! the cup of liberty might have been dashed from England's lips, and the taste of freedom held back for a hundred years.

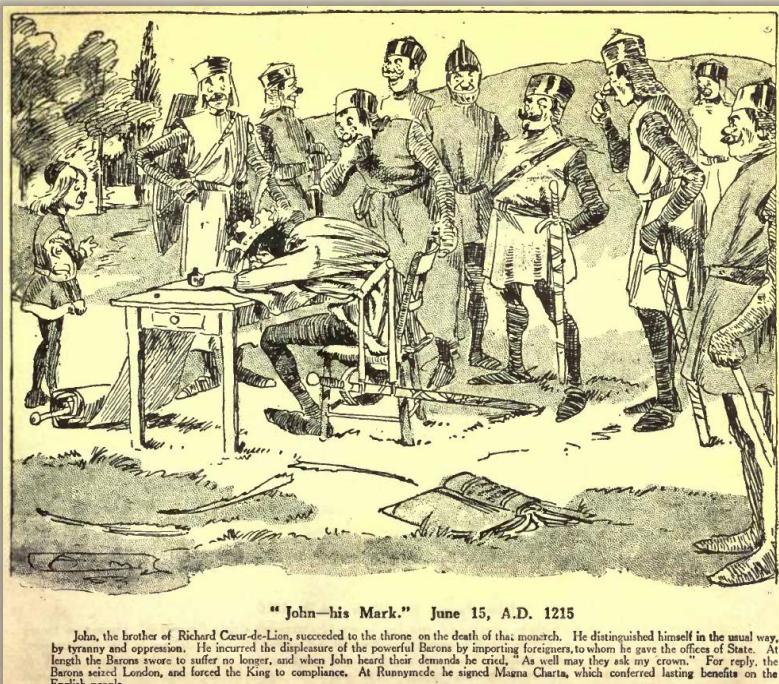
But the heart of King John sinks before the stern faces of the English fighting men, and the arm of King John drops back on to his rein, and he dismounts and takes his seat in the foremost barge. And the Barons follow in, with each mailed[*meshed armor usually formed from interlocking steel rings*] hand upon the sword-hilt[*decorative handle of a sword*], and the word is given to let go.

Slowly the heavy, bright-decked barges leave the shore of Runningmede. Slowly against the swift current they work their ponderous way, till, with a low grumble, they grate against the bank of the little island that from this day will bear the name of Magna Charta Island. And King John has stepped upon the shore, and we wait in breathless silence till a great shout cleaves the air, and the

great cornerstone in England's temple of liberty has, now we know, been firmly laid.



King John signing the Magna Carta (circa 1902)



"John—his Mark." June 15, A.D. 1215

John, the brother of Richard Coeur-de-Lion, succeeded to the throne on the death of that monarch. He distinguished himself in the usual way, by tyranny and oppression. He incurred the displeasure of the powerful Barons by importing foreigners, to whom he gave the offices of State. At length the Barons swore to suffer no longer, and when John heard their demands he cried, "As well may they ask my crown." For reply, the Barons seized London, and forced the King to compliance. At Runnymede he signed Magna Charta, which conferred lasting benefits on the English people.

Humorous take on King John signing the Magna Carta by Arthur Moreland from his book *Humours of History* (circa 1915). The text below the image reads as follows:

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James McNeill Whistler (American, 1834-1903)

*Thames Warehouses*, 1859

Etching and drypoint with foul biting in black ink on ivory laid paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XII

*Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.—Disadvantages of living in same house with pair of lovers.—A trying time for the English nation.—A night search for the picturesque.—Homeless and houseless.—Harris prepares to die.—An angel comes along.—Effect of sudden joy on Harris.—A little supper.—Lunch.—High price for mustard.—A fearful battle.—Maidenhead.—Sailing.—Three fishers.—We are cursed.*

F was sitting on the bank, conjuring up this scene to myself, when George remarked that when I was quite rested, perhaps I would not mind helping to wash up; and, thus recalled from the days of the glorious past to the prosaic[uninteresting] present, with all its misery and sin, I slid down into the boat and cleaned out the frying-pan with a stick of wood and a tuft of grass, polishing it up finally with George's wet shirt.

We went over to Magna Charta Island, and had a look at the stone which stands in



Magna Carta Memorial

the cottage there and on which the great Charter is said to have been signed; though, as to whether it really was signed there, or, as some say, on the other bank at "Runningmede," [see Appendix E] I decline to commit myself. As far as my own personal opinion goes, however, I am inclined to give weight to the popular island theory. Certainly, had I been one of the Barons, at the time, I should have strongly urged upon my comrades the advisability of our getting such a slippery customer as King John on to the island, where there was less chance of surprises and tricks.

There are the ruins of an old priory[convent] in the grounds of



**King Henry VIII**

Ankerwyke House, which is close to Picnic Point, and it was round about the grounds of this old priory that Henry VIII is said to have waited for and met Anne Boleyn. He also used to meet her at Hever Castle in Kent, and also somewhere near St. Albans. It must have been difficult for the people of England in those days to have found a spot where these thoughtless young folk were *not* spooning[kissing, caressing, conversing].

**Anne Boleyn (with head)**

Have you ever been in a house where there are a couple courting? It is most trying. You think you will go and sit in the drawing-room, and you march off there. As you open the door, you hear a noise as if somebody had suddenly recollected something, and, when you get in, Emily is over by the window, full of interest in the opposite side of the road, and your friend, John Edward, is at the other end of the room with his whole soul held in thrall by photographs of other people's relatives.

"Oh!" you say, pausing at the door, "I didn't know anybody was here."

"Oh! didn't you?" says Emily, coldly, in a tone which implies that she does not believe you.

You hang about for a bit, then you say:





Hever Castle by artist David Cox, Jr. (circa 1850)

"It's very dark. Why don't you light the gas?"

John Edward says, "Oh!" he hadn't noticed it; and Emily says that papa does not like the gas lit in the afternoon.

You tell them one or two items of news, and give them your views and opinions on the Irish question[The commencement on 1 January 1801 of the Acts of Union 1800, which merged Great Britain and Ireland into the United Kingdom, forced the British government to pay more attention to Ireland and its people. The statesman Benjamin Disraeli defined the Irish question as follows: *A dense population, in extreme distress, inhabit an island where there is an Established Church, which is not their Church, and a territorial aristocracy the richest of whom live in foreign capitals. Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church; and in addition the weakest executive in the world. That is the Irish Question.*]; but this does not appear to interest them. All they remark on any subject is, "Oh!" "Is it?" "Did he?" "Yes," and "You don't say so!" And, after ten minutes of such style of conversation, you edge up to the door, and slip out, and are surprised to find that the door immediately closes behind you, and shuts itself, without your having touched it.

Half an hour later, you think you will try a pipe in the conservatory. The only chair in the place is occupied by Emily; and John Edward, if the language of clothes can be relied upon, has evidently been sitting on the floor. They do not speak, but they give you a look that says all that can be said in a civilised[civilized] community; and you back out promptly and shut the door behind you.

You are afraid to poke your nose into any room in the house now; so, after walking up and down the stairs for a while, you go and sit in your own bedroom. This becomes uninteresting, however, after a time, and so you put on your hat and stroll out into the garden. You walk down the path, and as you pass the summer-house you glance in, and there are those two young idiots, huddled up into one corner of it; and they see you, and are evidently under the idea that, for some wicked purpose of your own, you are following them about.

"Why don't they have a special room for this sort of thing, and make people keep to it?" you mutter; and you rush back to the hall and get your umbrella and go out.

It must have been much like this when that foolish boy Henry VIII was courting his little Anne. People in Buckinghamshire would

have come upon them unexpectedly when they were mooning[wandering or gazing idly about] round Windsor and Wraysbury, and have exclaimed, "Oh! you here!" and Henry would have blushed and said, "Yes; he'd just come over to see a man;" and Anne would have said, "Oh, I'm so glad to see you! Isn't it funny? I've just met Mr. Henry VIII in the lane, and he's going the same way I am."



Then those people would have gone away and said to themselves:



"Oh! we'd better get out of here while this billing and cooing[kissing, talking and caressing] is on. We'll go down to Kent."

And they would go to Kent, and the first thing they would see in Kent, when they got there, would be Henry and Anne fooling round Hever Castle.

"Oh, drat this!" they would have said. "Here, let's go away. I can't stand any more of it. Let's go to St. Albans—nice quiet place, St. Albans."

And when they reached St. Albans, there would be that wretched couple, kissing under the Abbey walls. Then these folks would go and be pirates until the marriage was over.



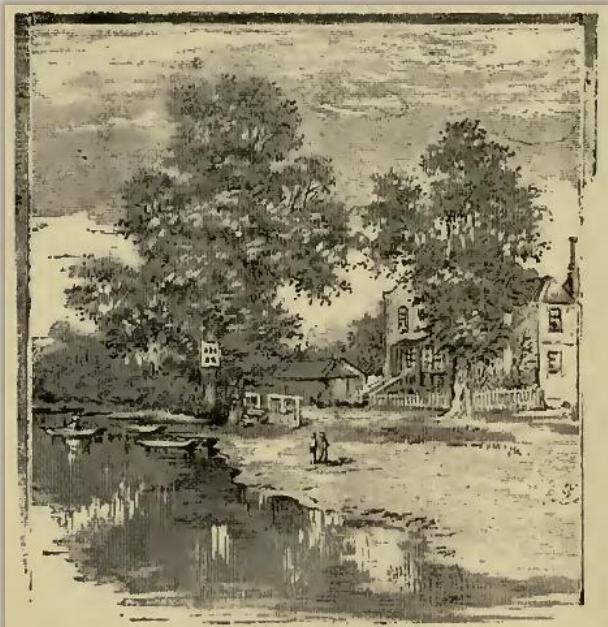
Church of St. Albans (Cathedral and Abbey)

From Picnic Point to Old Windsor Lock is a delightful bit of the river. A shady road, dotted here and there with dainty little cottages, runs

by the bank up to the "Bells of Ouseley," a picturesque inn, as most up-river inns are, and a place where a very good glass of ale may be drunk—so Harris says; and on a matter of this kind you can take



Harris's word. Old Windsor is a famous spot in its way. Edward the Confessor[11<sup>th</sup> century English king] had a palace here, and here the great Earl Godwin[Godwin, Earl of Wessex; 11<sup>th</sup> century nobleman] was proved guilty by the justice of that age of having encompassed [brought about] the death of the King's brother. Earl Godwin broke a piece of bread and held it in his hand.



"If I am guilty," said the Earl, "may this bread choke me when I eat it!"

Then he put the bread into his mouth and swallowed it, and it choked him, and he died.

After you pass Old Windsor, the river is somewhat uninteresting, and does not become itself again until you are nearing Boveney. George and I towed up past the Home Park, which stretches along the right bank from Albert to Victoria Bridge; and as we were passing Datchet, George asked me



if I remembered our first trip up the river, and when we landed at Datchet at ten o'clock at night, and wanted to go to bed.

I answered that I did remember it. It will be some time before I forget it.



The Thames, the Bells of Ouseley, Old Windsor by Sutton Palmer

It was the Saturday before the August Bank Holiday. We were tired and hungry, we same three, and when we got to Datchet we took out the hamper, the two bags, and the rugs and coats, and such like things, and started off to look for diggings[lodgings]. We passed a very pretty little hotel, with clematis and creeper over the porch; but there was no honeysuckle about it, and, for some reason or other, I had got my mind fixed on honeysuckle, and I said:



"Oh, don't let's go in there! Let's go on a bit further, and see if there isn't one with honeysuckle over it."

So we went on till we came to another hotel. That was a very nice hotel, too, and it had honeysuckle on it, round at the side; but Harris did not like the look of a man who was leaning against the front door. He said he didn't look a nice man at all, and he wore ugly boots: so we went on further. We went a goodish[fair amount] way without coming across any more hotels, and then we met a man, and asked him to direct us to a few.

He said:

"Why, you are coming away from them. You must turn right round and go back, and then you will come to the Stag."

We said:

"Oh, we had been there, and didn't like it—no honeysuckle over it."

"Well, then," he said, "there's the Manor House, just opposite. Have you tried that?"

Harris replied that we did not want to go there—didn't like the looks of a man who was stopping there—Harris did not like the colour of his hair, didn't like his boots, either.

"Well, I don't know what you'll do, I'm sure," said our informant[one who informs or give intelligence]; "because they are the only two inns in the place."

"No other inns!" exclaimed Harris.

"None," replied the man.

"What on earth are we to do?" cried Harris.

Then George spoke up. He said Harris and I could get an hotel built for us, if we liked, and have some people made to put in. For his part, he was going back to the Stag.

The greatest minds never realise[realize] their ideals in any matter; and Harris and I sighed over the hollowness[lacking substance] of all earthly desires, and followed George.

We took our traps[luggage; belongings] into the Stag, and laid them down in the hall.

The landlord came up and said:

"Good evening, gentlemen."

"Oh, good evening," said George; "we want three beds, please."

"Very sorry, sir," said the landlord; "but I'm afraid we can't manage it."

"Oh, well, never mind," said George, "two will do. Two of us can sleep in one bed, can't we?" he continued, turning to Harris and me.

Harris said, "Oh, yes;" he thought George and I could sleep in one bed very easily.

"Very sorry, sir," again repeated the landlord; "but we really haven't got a bed vacant in the whole house. In fact, we are putting two, and even three gentlemen in one bed, as it is."

This staggered us for a bit.

But Harris, who is an old traveller, rose to the occasion, and, laughing cheerily, said:

"Oh, well, we can't help it. We must rough it. You must give us a shake-down[a temporary substitute for a bed, as on a sofa, etc.; probably named from the original shaking down of straw for this purpose] in the billiard-room[room where billiards[snooker, pool] is played]."

"Very sorry, sir. Three gentlemen sleeping on the billiard-table already, and two in the coffee-room. Can't possibly take you in to-night."

We picked up our things, and went over to the Manor House. It was a pretty little place. I said I thought I should like it better than the other house; and Harris said, "Oh, yes," it would be all right, and we needn't look at the man with the red hair; besides, the poor fellow couldn't help having red hair.

Harris spoke quite kindly and sensibly about it.

The people at the Manor House did not wait to hear us talk. The landlady met us on the doorstep with the greeting that we were the fourteenth party she had turned away within the last hour and a half. As for our meek suggestions of stables, billiard-room, or coal-cellars, she laughed them all to scorn: all these nooks had been snatched up long ago.

Did she know of any place in the whole village where we could get shelter for the night?

"Well, if we didn't mind roughing it—she did not recommend it, mind—but there was a little beer shop half a mile down the Eton road—"

We waited to hear no more; we caught up[grabbed] the hamper and the bags, and the coats and rugs, and parcels, and ran. The distance seemed more like a mile than half a mile, but we reached the place at last, and rushed, panting, into the bar.

The people at the beer shop were rude. They merely laughed at us. There were only three beds in the whole house, and they had seven single gentlemen and two married couples sleeping there already. A kind-hearted bargeman, however, who happened to be in the tap-room, thought we might try the grocer's, next door to the Stag, and we went back.

The grocer's was full. An old woman we met in the shop then kindly took us along with her for a quarter of a mile, to a lady friend of hers, who occasionally let[rents] rooms to gentlemen.

This old woman walked very slowly, and we were twenty minutes getting to her lady friend's. She enlivened the journey by describing to us, as we trailed along, the various pains she had in her back.

Her lady friend's rooms were let. From there we were recommended to No. 27. No. 27 was full, and sent us to No. 32, and 32 was full.

Then we went back into the high road, and Harris sat down on the hamper and said he would go no further. He said it seemed a quiet spot, and he would like to die there. He requested George and me to kiss his mother for him, and to tell all his relations that he forgave them and died happy.

At that moment an angel came by in the disguise of a small boy (and I cannot think of any more effective disguise an angel could have assumed), with a can of beer in one hand, and in the other something at the end of a string, which he let down on to every flat stone he came across, and then pulled up again, this producing a peculiarly unattractive sound, suggestive of suffering.

We asked this heavenly messenger (as we discovered him afterwards to be) if he knew of any lonely house, whose occupants were few and feeble (old ladies or paralysed gentlemen preferred), who could be easily frightened into giving up their beds for the night to three desperate men; or, if not this, could he recommend us to an empty pigsty, or a disused limekiln[a kiln, or furnace, in which limestone is exposed to a strong heat and reduced to lime, a material used as mortar (similar in function to concrete placed between bricks)], or anything of that sort. He did not know of any such place—at least, not one handy; but he said that, if we liked to come with him, his mother had a room to spare, and could put us up for the night.

We fell upon his neck there in the moonlight and blessed him, and it would have made a very beautiful picture if the boy himself had not been so overpowered by our emotion as to be unable to sustain himself under it, and sunk to the ground, letting us all down on top of him. Harris was so overcome with joy that he fainted, and had to seize the boy's beer-can and half empty it before he could recover consciousness, and then he started off at a run, and left George and me to bring on the luggage.

It was a little four-roomed cottage where the boy lived, and his mother—good soul!—gave us hot bacon for supper, and we ate it all—five pounds—and a jam tart afterwards, and two pots of tea, and then we went to bed. There were two beds in the room; one was a 2ft. 6in. truckle bed[a low bed that move via truckles[wheels]], and George and I slept in that, and kept in by tying ourselves together with a sheet; and the other was the little boy's bed, and Harris had that all to himself, and we found him, in the morning, with two feet of bare leg sticking out at the bottom, and George and I used it to hang the towels on while we bathed.

We were not so uppish[snobbish] about what sort of hotel we would have, next time we went to Datchet.

To return to our present trip: nothing exciting happened, and we tugged steadily on to a little below Monkey Island, where we drew up and lunched. We tackled the cold beef for lunch, and then we found that we had forgotten to bring any mustard. I don't think I ever in my life, before or since, felt I wanted mustard as badly as I felt I wanted it then. I don't care for mustard as a rule, and it is very seldom that I take it at all, but I would have given worlds for it then.



Monkey Island

I don't know how many worlds there may be in the universe, but anyone who had brought me a spoonful of mustard at that precise moment could have had them all. I grow reckless like that when I want a thing and can't get it.

Harris said he would have given worlds for mustard too. It would have been a good thing for anybody who had come up to that spot

with a can of mustard, then: he would have been set up in worlds for the rest of his life.

But there! I daresay both Harris and I would have tried to back out of the bargain after we had got the mustard. One makes these extravagant offers in moments of excitement, but, of course, when one comes to think of it, one sees how absurdly out of proportion they are with the value of the required article. I heard a man, going up a mountain in Switzerland, once say he would give worlds for a glass of beer, and, when he came to a little shanty[crude dwelling] where they kept it, he kicked up a most fearful row because they charged him five francs[French currency] for a bottle of Bass[beer from the Bass Brewery in Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, England]. He said it was a scandalous[offensive] imposition[burden], and he wrote to the *Times*[a British daily national newspaper] about it.



It cast a gloom over the boat, there being no mustard. We ate our beef in silence. Existence seemed hollow and uninteresting. We thought of the happy days of childhood, and sighed. We brightened up a bit, however, over the apple-tart, and, when George drew out a tin[can] of pine-apple from the bottom of the hamper, and rolled it into the middle of the boat, we felt that life was worth living after all.

We are very fond of pine-apple, all three of us. We looked at the picture on the tin; we thought of the juice. We smiled at one another, and Harris got a spoon ready.

Then we looked for the knife to open the tin with. We turned out everything in the hamper. We turned out the bags. We pulled up the boards at the bottom of the boat. We took everything out on to the bank and shook it. There was no tin-opener to be found.

Then Harris tried to open the tin with a pocket-knife, and broke the knife and cut himself badly; and George tried a pair of scissors, and the scissors flew up, and nearly put his eye out. While they were dressing their wounds, I tried to make a hole in the thing with the spiky end of the hitcher, and the hitcher slipped and jerked me out between the boat and the bank into two feet of muddy water, and the tin rolled over, uninjured, and broke a teacup.

Then we all got mad. We took that tin out on the bank, and Harris went up into a field and got a big sharp stone, and I went back

into the boat and brought out the mast, and George held the tin and Harris held the sharp end of his stone against the top of it, and I took the mast and poised it high up in the air, and gathered up all my strength and brought it down.

It was George's straw hat that saved his life that day. He keeps that hat now (what is left of it), and, of a winter's evening, when the pipes are lit and the boys are telling stretchers [exaggerated stories] about the dangers they have passed through, George brings it down and shows it round, and the stirring tale is told anew, with fresh exaggerations every time.

Harris got off with merely a flesh wound.

After that, I took the tin off myself, and hammered at it with the mast till I was worn out and sick at heart, whereupon Harris took it in hand.



We beat it out flat; we beat it back square; we battered it into every form known to geometry—but we could not make a hole in it. Then George went at it, and knocked it into a shape, so strange, so weird, so unearthly in its wild hideousness, that he got frightened and threw away the mast. Then we all three sat round it on the grass and looked at it.

There was one great dent across the top that had the appearance of a mocking grin, and it drove us furious, so that Harris rushed at the thing, and caught it up, and flung it far into the middle of the river, and as it sank we hurled our curses at it, and we got into the boat and rowed away from the spot, and never paused till we reached Maidenhead.

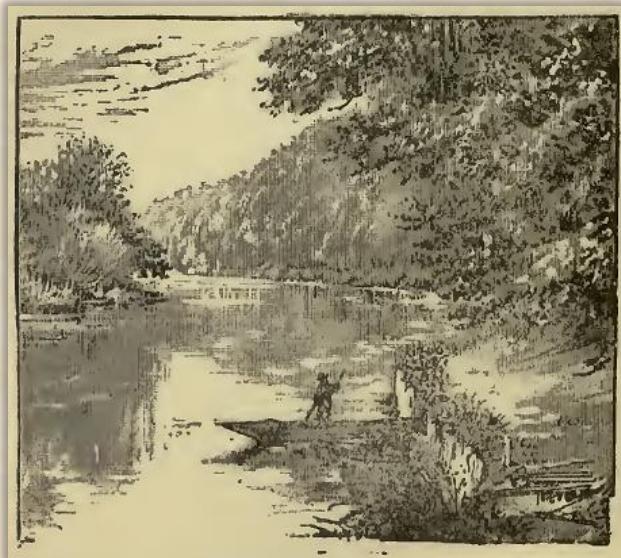
Maidenhead itself is too snobby to be pleasant. It is the haunt [place visited frequently] of the river swell [a man dressed fashionably or of high social standing] and his overdressed female companion. It is the town of showy hotels, patronised [patronized] chiefly by dudes [men very concerned with how they're dressed] and ballet girls. It is the witch's kitchen from which go forth those demons of the river—steam-launches. The *London Journal* [British weekly penny fiction magazine] duke always has his "little place" at Maidenhead; and the heroine of the three-volume



novel always dines there when she goes out on the spree with somebody else's husband.

We went through Maidenhead quickly, and then eased up, and took leisurely that grand reach beyond Boulter's and Cookham locks. Cliveden Woods still wore their dainty dress of spring, and rose up, from the water's edge, in one long harmony of blended shades of fairy green. In its unbroken loveliness this is, perhaps, the sweetest stretch of all the river, and lingeringly we slowly drew our little boat away from its deep peace.

We pulled up in the backwater, just below Cookham, and had tea; and, when we were through the lock, it was evening. A stiffish[slightly strong] breeze had sprung up—in our favour, for a wonder[surprisingly]; for, as a rule on the river, the wind is always dead against you whatever way you go. It is against you in the morning, when you start for a day's trip, and you pull a long distance, thinking how easy it will be to come back with the sail. Then, after tea, the wind veers[changes direction] round, and you have to pull hard in its teeth all the way home.



When you forget to take the sail at all, then the wind is consistently in your favour both ways. But there! this world is only a probation[trial], and man was born to trouble as the sparks fly

upward[This last clause is taken from the Christian Bible, Book of Job, Chapter 5, Verse 7: *Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.* The phrase *as the sparks fly upward* means *naturally* or *in human nature* just as sparks from a campfire float naturally skyward.].

This evening, however, they had evidently made a mistake, and had put the wind round at our back instead of in our face. We kept very quiet about it, and got the sail up quickly before they found it out, and then we spread ourselves about the boat in thoughtful attitudes, and the sail bellied out, and strained, and grumbled at the mast, and the boat flew.

I steered.

There is no more thrilling sensation I know of than sailing. It comes as near to flying as man has got to yet—except in dreams. The wings of the rushing wind seem to be bearing you onward, you know not where. You are no longer the slow, plodding, puny thing of clay, creeping tortuously upon the ground; you are a part of Nature! Your heart is throbbing against hers! Her glorious arms are round you, raising you up against her heart! Your spirit is at one with hers; your limbs grow light! The voices of the air are singing to you. The earth seems far away and little; and the clouds, so close above your head, are brothers, and you stretch your arms to them.

We had the river to ourselves, except that, far in the distance, we could see a fishing-punt[flat-bottomed boat], moored in mid-stream, on which three fishermen sat; and we skimmed over the water, and passed the wooded banks, and no one spoke.

I was steering.

As we drew nearer, we could see that the three men fishing seemed old and solemn-looking men. They sat on three chairs in the punt, and watched intently their lines. And the red sunset threw a mystic light upon the waters, and tinged with fire the towering woods, and made a golden glory of the piled-up clouds. It was an hour of deep enchantment, of ecstatic hope and longing. The little sail stood out against the purple sky, the gloaming[twilight, dusk] lay around us, wrapping the world in rainbow shadows; and, behind us, crept the night.



We seemed like knights of some old legend, sailing across some mystic lake into the unknown realm of twilight, unto the great land of the sunset.

We did not go into the realm of twilight; we went *slap[bang]* into that punt, where those three old men were fishing. We did not know what had happened at first, because the sail shut out the view, but from the nature of the language that rose up upon the evening air, we gathered that we had come into the neighbourhood of human beings, and that they were vexed[irritated] and discontented.

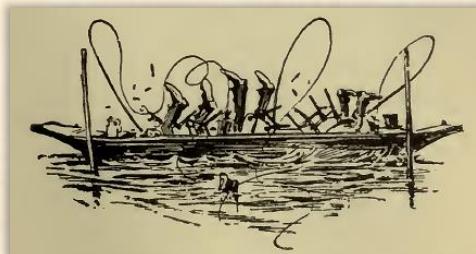
Harris let the sail down, and then we saw what had happened. We had knocked those three old gentlemen off their chairs into a general heap at the bottom of the boat, and they were now slowly and painfully sorting themselves out from each other, and picking fish off themselves; and as they worked, they cursed us—not with a common cursory[hasty or superficial] curse, but with long, carefully-thought-out, comprehensive curses, that embraced the whole of our career, and went away into the distant future, and included all our relations, and covered everything connected with us—good, substantial curses.

Harris told them they ought to be grateful for a little excitement, sitting there fishing all day, and he also said that he was shocked and grieved to hear men their age give way to temper so.

But it did not do any good.

George said he would steer, after that. He said a mind like mine ought not to be expected to give itself away in steering boats—better let a mere commonplace human being see after that boat, before we jolly well all got drowned; and he took the lines, and brought us up to Marlow.

And at Marlow we left the boat by the bridge, and went and put up for the night at the "Crown."









Francis Seymour Haden (English, 1818-1910)  
*Thames Fishermen, No. I, 1859*  
Drypoint with etching on ivory Japanese paper  
The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XIII

*Marlow.—Bisham Abbey.—The Medmenham Monks.—Montmorency thinks he will murder an old Tom cat.—But eventually decides that he will let it live.—Shameful conduct of a fox terrier at the Civil Service Stores.—Our departure from Marlow.—An imposing procession.—The steam launch, useful receipts for annoying and hindering it.—We decline to drink the river.—A peaceful dog.—Strange disappearance of Harris and a pie.*

**M**arlow is one of the pleasantest river centres[centers] I know of. It is a bustling[hurriedly active], lively little town; not very picturesque on the whole, it is true, but there are many quaint nooks and corners to be found in it, nevertheless—standing arches in the shattered bridge of Time, over which our fancy[in this context, fancy does not mean impressive, but rather imagination] travels[based on the previous annotation, this is a verb, not a noun] back to the days when Marlow Manor owned Saxon Algar[a personal name possibly referring to one of twenty surviving Saxon thanes[also spelled thegn; a fairly high-ranking aristocrat who owned substantial land in one or more counties] who survived the Norman Conquest in 1066] for its lord, ere[before] conquering William[William the Conqueror, first Norman king of England, reigning from 1066 to 1087] seized it to give to Queen Matilda[Matilda of Flanders, William's wife], ere it passed to the Earls of Warwick or to worldly-wise Lord Paget[William Paget, English statesman], the councillor[advisor] of four successive sovereigns.



Queen Matilda working on the Bayeux Tapestry by Alfred Guillard (1848)

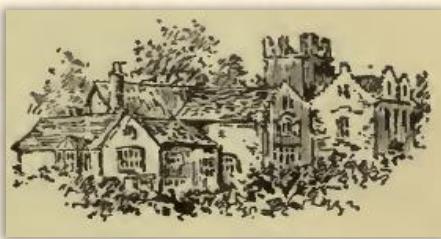


Quarry Woods

There is lovely country round about it, too, if, after boating, you are fond of a walk, while the river itself is at its best here. Down to Cookham, past the Quarry Woods and the meadows, is a lovely reach. Dear old Quarry Woods! with your narrow, climbing paths, and little winding glades[open spaces in the woods], how scented to this hour you seem with memories of sunny summer days! How haunted are your shadowy vistas with the ghosts of laughing faces! how from your whispering leaves there softly fall the voices of long ago!



From Marlow up to Sonning is even fairer yet. Grand old Bisham Abbey, whose stone walls have rung to the shouts of the Knights Templars [Catholic military order active from 1119 to 1312], and which, at one time, was the home of Anne of Cleves[fourth wife of Henry VIII] and at another of Queen Elizabeth, is passed on the right bank just half a mile above Marlow Bridge. Bisham Abbey is rich in melodramatic properties.



It contains a tapestry bed-chamber[a room to sleep in], and a secret room hid high up in the thick walls. The ghost of the Lady Holy, who beat her little boy to death, still walks there at night, trying to wash its ghostly hands clean in a ghostly basin.

Warwick[Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick], the king-maker[a person or group that has influence over royal succession while not being viable candidates themselves], rests there, careless[in this context, careless doesn't mean unconcerned, but rather inattentive (because he's dead...and you can't get more inattentive than that!)] now about such trivial things as earthly kings and earthly kingdoms; and Salisbury[William Montagu,

Bisham Abbey (above and right)



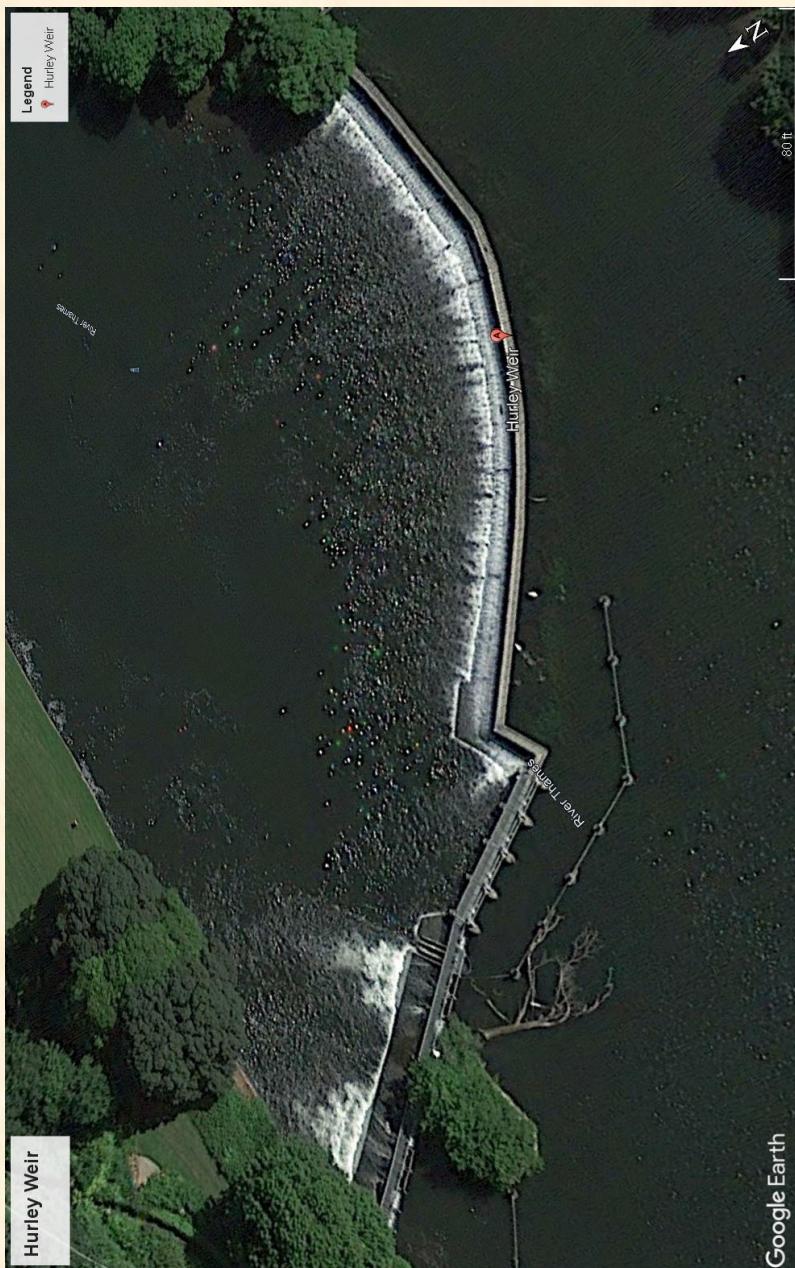
2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Salisbury, English nobleman], who did good service at Poitiers[Battle at Poitiers (1356)]. Just before you come to the abbey, and right on the river's bank, is Bisham Church, and, perhaps, if any tombs are worth inspecting, they are the tombs and monuments in



Battle at Poitiers by artist Eugène Delacroix (1830)

Bisham Church. It was while floating in his boat under the Bisham beeches that Shelley[Percy Bysshe Shelley, English poet], who was then living at Marlow (you can see his house now, in West street), composed *The Revolt of Islam*[poem published in 1818 consisting of 12 cantos[division of long poems; akin to chapters] totaling 4818 lines (which I certainly will not reproduce here)].

By Hurley Weir, a little higher up, I have often thought that I could stay a month without having sufficient time to drink in all the beauty of the scene. The village of Hurley, five minutes' walk from the lock, is as old a little spot as there is on the river, dating, as it does, to quote the quaint phraseology of those dim days, "from the times of King Sebert[reigned from 604 to 616] and King Offa[reigned from 757 to 796]." Just past the weir (going up) is Danes' Field, where the invading Danes once encamped, during their march to Gloucestershire; and a little further still, nestling by a sweet corner of the stream, is what is left of Medmenham Abbey.



The famous Medmenham monks, or "Hell Fire Club," as they were commonly called, and of whom the notorious Wilkes[John Wilkes, English journalist, politician, essayist, soldier] was a member, were a fraternity whose motto was "Do as you please," and that invitation still stands over the ruined doorway of the abbey. Many years before this bogus[fake] abbey, with its congregation of irreverent[disrespectful] jesters[buffoons], was founded, there stood upon this same spot a monastery of a sterner kind, whose monks were of a somewhat different type to the revellers that were to follow them, five hundred years afterwards.

The Cistercian monks, whose abbey stood there in the thirteenth century, wore no clothes but

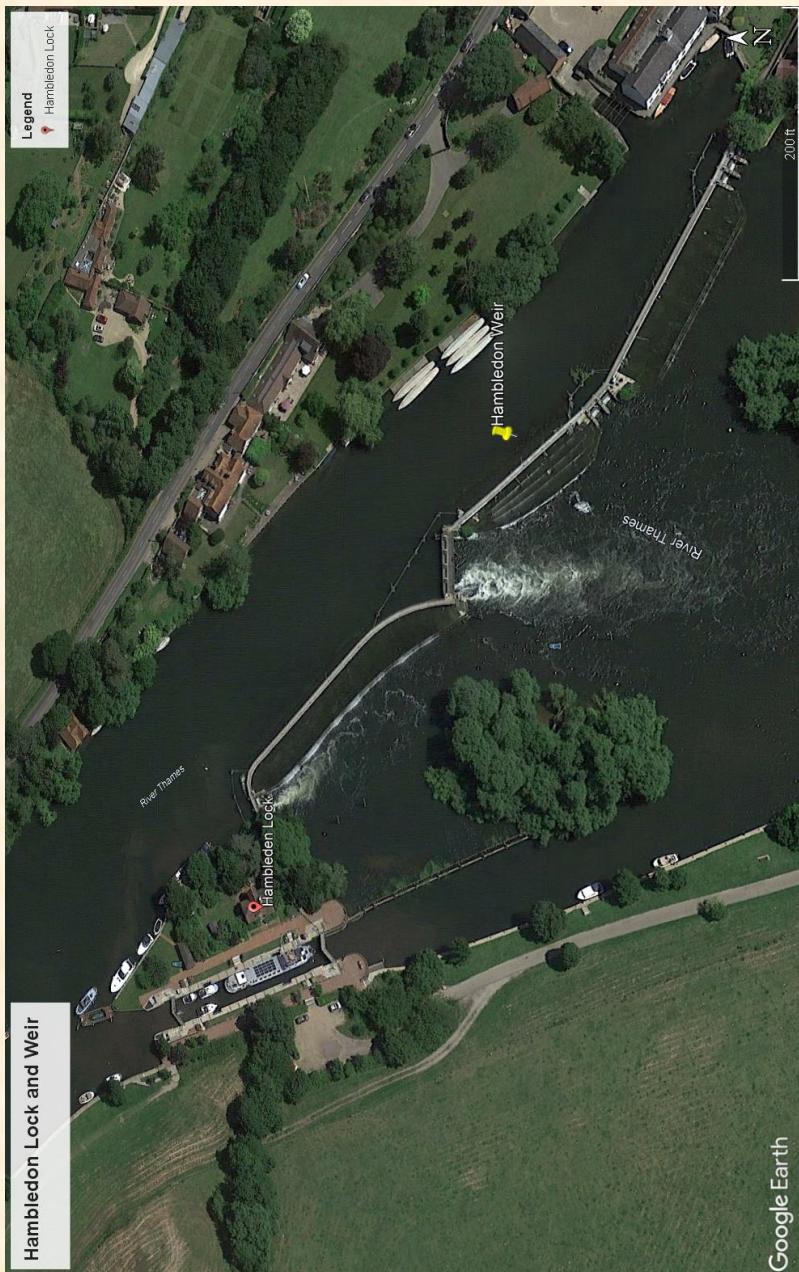


Medmenham Abbey

rough tunics[loose-fitting garment, usually knee-length; think Game of Thrones] and cowls[hooded garments usually worn by monks; think hoodie, but with the bottom half missing], and ate no flesh, nor fish, nor eggs. They lay upon straw, and they rose at midnight to mass. They spent the day in labour, reading, and prayer; and over all their lives there fell a silence as of death, for no one spoke.

A grim fraternity[a body of men associated for some common purpose], passing grim lives in that sweet spot, that God had made so bright! Strange that Nature's voices all around them—the soft singing of the waters, the whisperings of the river grass, the music of the rushing wind—should not have taught them a truer meaning of life than this. They listened there, through the long days, in silence, waiting for a voice from heaven; and all day long and through the solemn night it spoke to them in myriad[a large number of] tones, and they heard it not.

From Medmenham to sweet Hambledon Lock the river is full of peaceful beauty, but, after it passes Greenlands, the rather uninteresting looking river residence of my newsagent[merchant who sells newspapers]—a quiet unassuming old gentleman, who may often



be met with about these regions, during the summer months, sculling himself along in easy vigorous style, or chatting genially to some old lock-keeper, as he passes through—until well the other side of Henley, it is somewhat bare and dull.

We got up tolerably early on the Monday morning at Marlow, and went for a bathe[the act of taking a bath; pronounced with long a] before breakfast; and, coming back, Montmorency made an awful ass of himself. The only subject on which Montmorency and I have any serious difference of opinion is cats. I like cats; Montmorency does not.

When I meet a cat, I say, "Poor Pussy!" and stop down and tickle the side of its head; and the cat sticks up its tail in a rigid, cast-iron manner, arches its back, and wipes its nose up against my trousers; and all is gentleness and peace. When Montmorency meets a cat, the whole street knows about it; and there is enough bad language wasted in ten seconds to last an ordinarily respectable man all his life, with care.

I do not blame the dog (contenting myself, as a rule, with merely clouting[striking] his head or throwing stones at him), because I take it that it is his nature. Fox-terriers are born with about four times as much original sin in them as other dogs are, and it will take years and years of patient effort on the part of us Christians to bring about any appreciable reformation[improvement] in the rowdiness[coarse behavior] of the fox-terrier nature.

I remember being in the lobby of the Haymarket Stores one day, and all round about me were dogs, waiting for the return of their owners, who were shopping inside. There were a mastiff, and one or two collies, and a St. Bernard, a few retrievers and Newfoundlands, a boar-hound, a French poodle, with plenty of hair round its head, but mangy[scruffy] about the middle; a bull-dog, a few Lowther Arcade[An arcade is a long arched gallery, lined with shops on both sides; Lowther Arcade, built in 1830 with glass domes embedded in the ceiling, contained 24 shops. It remained opened until it was demolished at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Jerome may mean *toy-sized dogs* since Lowther Arcade began to sell toys in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.] sort of animals, about the size of rats, and a couple of Yorkshire tykes[mongrels, dogs of mixed breed].



There they sat, patient, good, and thoughtful. A solemn [impressing with seriousness] peacefulness seemed to reign in that lobby. An air of calmness and resignation—of gentle sadness pervaded the room.

Then a sweet young lady entered, leading a meek-looking little fox-terrier, and left him, chained up there, between the bull-dog and the poodle. He sat and looked about him for a minute. Then he cast up his eyes to the ceiling, and seemed, judging from his expression, to be thinking of his mother. Then he yawned. Then he looked round at the other dogs, all silent, grave, and dignified.

He looked at the bull-dog, sleeping dreamlessly on his right. He looked at the poodle, erect and haughty, on his left. Then, without a word of warning, without the shadow of a provocation, he bit that poodle's near fore-leg, and a yelp of agony rang through the quiet shades of that lobby.

The result of his first experiment seemed highly satisfactory to him, and he determined to go on and make things lively all round. He sprang over the poodle and vigorously attacked a collie, and the collie woke up, and immediately commenced a fierce and noisy contest with the poodle. Then Foxey came back to his own place, and caught the bull-dog by the ear, and tried to throw him away; and the bull-dog, a curiously impartial animal, went for everything he could reach, including the hall-porter, which gave that dear little terrier the opportunity to enjoy an uninterrupted fight of his own with an equally willing Yorkshire tyke.

Anyone who knows canine nature need hardly be told that, by this time, all the other dogs in the place were fighting as if their



Lowther Arcade (circa 1834)

hearths and homes[phrase meaning home and family life] depended on the fray[brawl]. The big dogs fought each other indiscriminately; and the little dogs fought among themselves, and filled up their spare time by biting the legs of the big dogs.

The whole lobby was a perfect pandemonium[uproar], and the din[noise] was terrific. A crowd assembled outside in the Haymarket, and asked if it was a vestry[a room attached to a church where meetings are held] meeting; or, if not, who was being murdered, and why? Men came with poles and ropes, and tried to separate the dogs, and the police were sent for.

And in the midst of the riot that sweet young lady returned, and snatched up that sweet little dog of hers (he had laid the tyke up for a month, and had on the expression, now, of a new-born lamb) into her arms, and kissed him, and asked him if he was killed, and what those great nasty brutes of dogs had been doing to him; and he nestled up against her, and gazed up into her face with a look that seemed to say: "Oh, I'm so glad you've come to take me away from this disgraceful scene!"

She said that the people at the Stores had no right to allow great savage things like those other dogs to be put with respectable people's dogs, and that she had a great mind to summon somebody.

Such is the nature of fox-terriers; and, therefore, I do not blame Montmorency for his tendency to row with cats; but he wished he had not given way to it that morning.

We were, as I have said, returning from a dip, and half-way up the High Street a cat darted out from one of the houses in front of us, and began to trot across the road. Montmorency gave a cry of joy—the cry of a stern warrior who sees his enemy given over to his hands—the sort of cry Cromwell[Oliver Cromwell, English politician and statesman] might have uttered when the Scots came down the hill—and flew after his prey.

His victim was a large black Tom[cat]. I never saw a larger cat, nor a more disreputable-looking cat. It had lost half its tail, one of its ears, and a fairly appreciable proportion of its nose. It was a long, sinewy[strong]-looking animal. It had a calm, contented air about it.

Montmorency went for that poor cat at the rate of twenty miles an hour; but the cat did not hurry up—did not seem to have grasped the idea that its life was in danger. It trotted quietly on until its would-be assassin was within a yard of it, and then it turned round

and sat down in the middle of the road, and looked at Montmorency with a gentle, inquiring expression, that said:

"Yes! You want me?"

Montmorency does not lack pluck; but there was something about the look of that cat that might have chilled the heart of the boldest dog. He stopped abruptly, and looked back at Tom.

Neither spoke; but the conversation that one could imagine was clearly as follows:

THE CAT: "Can I do anything for you?"

MONTMORENCY: "No—no, thanks."

THE CAT: "Don't you mind speaking, if you really want anything, you know."

MONTMORENCY (*Backing down the High Street*): "Oh, no—not at all—certainly—don't you trouble. I—I am afraid I've made a mistake. I thought I knew you. Sorry I disturbed you."

THE CAT: "Not at all—quite a pleasure. Sure you don't want anything, now?"

MONTMORENCY (*still backing*): "Not at all, thanks—not at all—very kind of you. Good morning."

THE CAT: "Good-morning."

Then the cat rose, and continued his trot; and Montmorency, fitting what he calls his tail carefully into its groove, came back to us, and took up an unimportant position in the rear.

To this day, if you say the word "Cats!" to Montmorency, he will visibly shrink and look up piteously at you, as if to say:

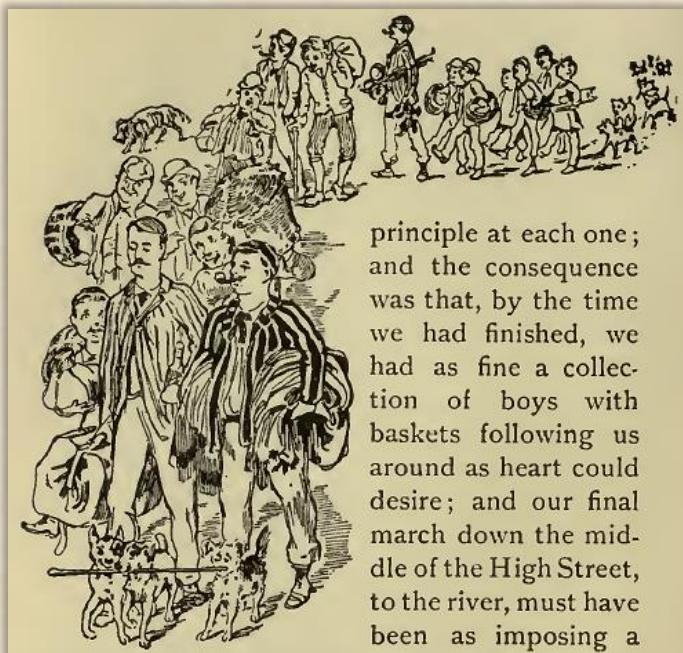
"Please don't."

We did our marketing after breakfast, and revictualled the boat for three days. George said we ought to take vegetables—that it was unhealthy not to eat vegetables. He said they were easy enough to cook, and that he would see to that; so we got ten pounds of potatoes, a bushel of peas, and a few cabbages. We got a beefsteak pie, a couple of gooseberry tarts, and a leg of mutton from the hotel; and fruit, and cakes, and bread and butter, and jam, and bacon and

eggs, and other things we foraged[searched for provisions] round about the town for.

Our departure from Marlow I regard as one of our greatest successes. It was dignified and impressive, without being ostentatious[showy]. We had insisted at all the shops we had been to that the things should be sent with us then and there. None of your "Yes, sir, I will send them off at once: the boy will be down there before you are, sir!" and then fooling about on the landing-stage[dock], and going back to the shop twice to have a row about them, for us. We waited while the basket was packed, and took the boy with us.

We went to a good many shops, adopting this principle at each one; and the consequence was that, by the time we had finished, we had as fine a collection of boys with baskets following us around as heart could desire; and our final march down the middle of the High Street, to the river, must have been as imposing a spectacle as Marlow had seen for many a long day.



The order of the procession was as follows:

Montmorency, carrying a stick.

Two disreputable-looking curs[dogs], friends of Montmorency's.

George, carrying coats and rugs, and smoking a short pipe.

Harris, trying to walk with easy grace, while carrying a bulged-out Gladstone bag in one hand and a bottle of lime-juice in the other.

Greengrocer's boy and baker's boy, with baskets.

Boots from the hotel, carrying hamper.

Confectioner's boy, with basket.

Grocer's boy, with basket.

Long-haired dog.

Cheesemonger's[seller of cheeses] boy, with basket.

Odd man carrying a bag.

Bosom companion of odd man, with his hands in his pockets, smoking a short clay[pipe for smoking tobacco].

Fruiterer's boy, with basket.

Myself, carrying three hats and a pair of boots, and trying to look as if I didn't know it.

Six small boys, and four stray dogs.

When we got down to the landing-stage, the boatman said:

"Let me see, sir; was yours a steam launch[small boat propelled by steam] or a house-boat?"

On our informing him it was a double-sculling skiff, he seemed surprised.

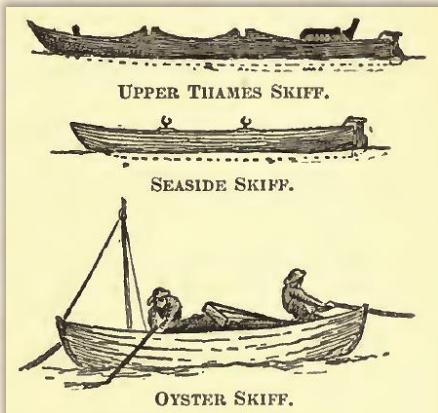
We had a good deal of trouble with steam launches that morning. It was just before the Henley week[the annual six-day Henley Regatta is a rowing event on the River Thames by the town of Henley-on-Thames], and they were going up in large numbers; some by themselves, some towing houseboats. I do hate steam launches: I suppose every rowing



Henley Regatta (circa late 1800s)

man does. I never see a steam launch but I feel I should like to lure it to a lonely part of the river, and there, in the silence and the solitude, strangle it.

There is a blatant bumpituousness [impertinence] about a steam launch that has the knack



of rousing every evil instinct in my nature, and I yearn for the good old days, when you could go about and tell people what you thought of them with a hatchet and a bow and arrows. The expression on the face of the man who, with his hands in his pockets, stands by the stern, smoking a cigar, is sufficient to excuse a

breach of the peace by itself; and the lordly whistle for you to get out of the way would, I am confident, ensure a verdict of "justifiable homicide" from any jury of river men.

They used to *have* to whistle for us to get out of their way. If I may do so, without appearing boastful, I think I can honestly say that our one small boat, during that week, caused more annoyance and delay and aggravation to the steam launches that we came across than all the other craft on the river put together.

**Silent deaths** — A name given by fishermen to screw steam vessels, and possibly not altogether without reason. Those who have found themselves accidentally in too close proximity to large steamers, more especially towards night, will appreciate the full meaning of the term, and will have discovered how silently these huge vessels creep along.

— A. Anstead, *A Dictionary of Sea Terms* (1898)

"Steam launch, coming!" one of us would cry out, on sighting the enemy in the distance; and, in an instant, everything was got ready to receive her. I would take the lines, and Harris and George would sit down beside me, all of us with our backs to the launch, and the boat would drift out quietly into mid-stream.

On would come the launch, whistling, and on we would go, drifting. At about a hundred yards off, she would start whistling like mad, and the people would come and lean over the side, and roar at us; but we never heard them! Harris would be telling us an anecdote about his mother, and George and I would not have missed a word of it for worlds.

Then that launch would give one final shriek of a whistle that would nearly burst the boiler, and she would reverse her engines, and blow off steam, and swing round and get aground; everyone on board of it would rush to the bow and yell at us, and the people on the bank would stand and shout to us, and all the other passing boats would stop and join in, till the whole river for miles up and down was in a state of frantic commotion. And then Harris would break off in the most interesting part of his narrative, and look up with mild surprise, and say to George:

"Why, George, bless me, if here isn't a steam launch!"

And George would answer:

"Well, do you know, I *thought* I heard something!"

Upon which we would get nervous and confused, and not know how to get the boat out of the way, and the people in the launch would crowd round and instruct us:

"Pull your right—you, you idiot! back with your left. No, not *you*—the other one—leave the lines alone, can't you—now, both together. NOT *that* way. Oh, you—!"

Then they would lower a boat and come to our assistance; and, after quarter of an hour's effort, would get us clean out of their way, so that they could go on; and we would thank them so much, and ask them to give us a tow. But they never would.

Another good way we discovered of irritating the aristocratic type of steam launch, was to mistake them for a beanfeast[annual party for employees given by their employers], and ask them if they were Messrs. Cubit's[Thomas, William and Lewis Cubitt[sic]] were prominent English engineering contractors who, among their many great undertakings, worked on housing developments, bridges, railway stations, public parks, a part of the Thames embankment, etc.] lot or the Bermondsey[a district approximately 4 miles southeast of London city center] Good Templars[an organization promoting abstinence from alcohol and other drugs], and could they lend us a saucepan.

Old ladies, not accustomed to the river, are always intensely nervous of steam launches. I remember going up once from Staines to Windsor—a stretch of water peculiarly rich in these mechanical monstrosities—with a party containing three ladies of this description. It was very exciting. At the first glimpse of every steam launch that came in view, they insisted on landing and sitting down on the bank until it was out of sight again. They said they were very sorry, but that they owed it to their families not to be foolhardy[foolish].

We found ourselves short of water at Hambledon Lock; so we took our jar and went up to the lock-keeper's house to beg for some.

George was our spokesman. He put on a winning smile, and said:

"Oh, please could you spare us a little water?"

"Certainly," replied the old gentleman; "take as much as you want, and leave the rest."

"Thank you so much," murmured George, looking about him. "Where—where do you keep it?"

"It's always in the same place my boy," was the stolid reply: "just behind you."

"I don't see it," said George, turning round.

"Why, bless us, where's your eyes?" was the man's comment, as he twisted George round and pointed up and down the stream. "There's enough of it to see, ain't there?"

"Oh!" exclaimed George, grasping the idea; "but we can't drink the river, you know!"

"No; but you can drink *some* of it," replied the old fellow. "It's what *I've* drunk for the last fifteen years."

George told him that his appearance, after the course, did not seem a sufficiently good advertisement for the brand; and that he would prefer it out of a pump.

We got some from a cottage a little higher up. I daresay *that* was only river water, if we had known. But we did not know, so it was all right. What the eye does not see, the stomach does not get upset over.

We tried river water once, later on in the season, but it was not a success. We were coming down stream, and had pulled up to have tea in a backwater[branch of a main river with little or no current] near

Windsor. Our jar was empty, and it was a case of going without our tea or taking water from the river. Harris was for chancing it. He said it must be all right if we boiled the water. He said that the various germs of poison present in the water would be killed by the boiling. So we filled our kettle with Thames backwater, and boiled it; and very careful we were to see that it did boil.

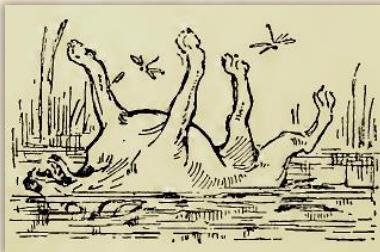
We had made the tea, and were just settling down comfortably to drink it, when George, with his cup half-way to his lips, paused and exclaimed:

"What's that?"

"What's what?" asked Harris and I.

"Why that!" said George, looking westward.

Harris and I followed his gaze, and saw, coming down towards us on the sluggish current, a dog. It was one of the quietest and peacefulst dogs I have ever seen. I never met a dog who seemed more contented—more easy in its mind. It was floating dreamily on its back, with its four legs stuck up straight into the air. It was what I should call a full-bodied dog, with a well-developed chest. On he came, serene, dignified, and calm, until he was abreast of our boat, and there, among the rushes, he eased up, and settled down cosily[cozily; comfortably] for the evening.



George said he didn't want any tea, and emptied his cup into the water. Harris did not feel thirsty, either, and followed suit. I had drunk half mine, but I wished I had not.

I asked George if he thought I was likely to have typhoid.

He said: "Oh, no;" he thought I had a very good chance indeed of escaping it. Anyhow, I should know in about a fortnight, whether I had or had not.

We went up the backwater to Wargrave. It is a short cut, leading out of the right-hand bank about half a mile above Marsh Lock, and is well worth taking, being a pretty, shady little piece of stream, besides saving nearly half a mile of distance.



Of course, its entrance is studded with posts and chains, and surrounded with notice boards, menacing all kinds of torture, imprisonment, and death to everyone who dares set scull upon its waters—I wonder some of these riparian boors [coarse or awkward people] don't



claim the air of the river and threaten everyone with forty shillings fine who breathes it—but the posts and chains a little skill will easily avoid; and as for the boards, you might, if you have five minutes to spare, and there is nobody about, take one or two of them down and throw them into the river.

Half-way up the backwater, we got out and lunched; and it was during this lunch that George and I received rather a trying shock.

Harris received a shock, too; but I do not think Harris's shock could have been anything like so bad as the shock that George and I had over the business.

You see, it was in this way: we were sitting in a meadow, about ten yards from the water's edge, and we had just settled down comfortably to feed. Harris had the beefsteak pie between his knees, and was carving it, and George and I were waiting with our plates ready.

"Have you got a spoon there?" says Harris; "I want a spoon to help the gravy with."

The hamper was close behind us, and George and I both turned round to reach one out. We were not five seconds getting it. When we looked round again, Harris and the pie were gone!

It was a wide, open field. There was not a tree or a bit of hedge for hundreds of yards. He could not have tumbled into the river, because we were on the water side of him, and he would have had to climb over us to do it.

George and I gazed all about. Then we gazed at each other.

"Has he been snatched up to heaven?" I queried.

"They'd hardly have taken the pie, too," said George.

There seemed weight in this objection, and we discarded the heavenly theory.

"I suppose the truth of the matter is," suggested George, descending to the commonplace and practicable, "that there has been an earthquake."

And then he added, with a touch of sadness in his voice: "I wish he hadn't been carving that pie."

With a sigh, we turned our eyes once more towards the spot where Harris and the pie had last been seen on earth; and there, as our blood froze in our veins and our hair stood up on end, we saw Harris's head—and nothing but his head—sticking bolt upright among the tall grass, the face very red, and bearing upon it an expression of great indignation!

George was the first to recover.

"Speak!" he cried, "and tell us whether you are alive or dead—and where is the rest of you?"

"Oh, don't be a stupid ass!" said Harris's head. "I believe you did it on purpose."

"Did what?" exclaimed George and I.

"Why, put me to sit here—darn silly trick! Here, catch hold of the pie."

And out of the middle of the earth, as it seemed to us, rose the pie—very much mixed up and damaged; and, after it, scrambled Harris—tumbled, grubby, and wet.

He had been sitting, without knowing it, on the very verge[edge] of a small gully, the long grass hiding it from view; and in leaning a little back he had shot over, pie and all.

He said he had never felt so surprised in all his life, as when he first felt himself going, without being able to conjecture in the slightest what had happened. He thought at first that the end of the world had come.

Harris believes to this day that George and I planned it all beforehand. Thus does unjust suspicion follow even the most blameless for, as the poet says, "Who shall escape calumny[slander; false accusation maliciously made]?" [The poet J. is referring to may be Shakespeare. If so, the quote, spoken by Hamlet, is "If thou dost marry, I'll



give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, **thou shalt not escape calumny.**" It's in keeping with the character of J. that Jerome has him misquote something as well as reduce Shakespeare down to a mere "poet".]

Who, indeed!



Anders Zorn (Swedish, 1860-1920)

*On the Thames*, 1883

Etching on ivory wove paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XIV

*W*argrave.—Waxworks.—Sonning.—Our stew.—Montmorency is sarcastic.—Fight between Montmorency and the tea-kettle.—George's banjo studies.—Meet with discouragement.—Difficulties in the way of the musical amateur.—Learning to play the bagpipes.—Harris feels sad after supper.—George and I go for a walk.—Return hungry and wet.—There is a strangeness about Harris.—Harris and the swans, a remarkable story.—Harris has a troubled night.

**W**e caught a breeze, after lunch, which took us gently up past Wargrave and Shiplake. Mellowed in the drowsy sunlight of a summer's afternoon, Wargrave, nestling where the river bends, makes a sweet old picture as you pass it, and one that lingers long upon the retina of memory.

The "George and Dragon" [a pub; named after the legend of St. George and the Dragon] at Wargrave boasts a sign, painted on the one side by Leslie [George Leslie, painter, author, illustrator], R.A. [Royal Academician, indicates membership in the Royal Academy of Arts], and on the other by Hodgson [John Evan Hodgson, painter; also a member of the Royal Academy of Arts] of that ilk [of that type; Jerome is indicating that Hodgson was a painter as well]. Leslie has depicted the fight; Hodgson has imagined the



scene, "After the Fight"—George, the work done, enjoying his pint of beer.[Since the original sign is badly faded and cracked, new signs were painted in 2006. The images were loosely inspired by Hodgson's and Leslie's originals. After some outrage, the signs were changed to be more similar to the original two paintings.]

Day[Thomas Day, see Chapter VI for more information], the author of *Sandford and Merton*, lived and—



more credit to the place still—was killed at Wargrave. In the church is a memorial to Mrs. Sarah Hill, who bequeathed 1 pound annually, to be divided at Easter, between two boys

and two girls who "have never been undutiful to their parents; who have never been known to swear or to tell untruths, to steal, or to break windows." Fancy giving up all that for five shillings a year! It is not worth it.

It is rumoured in the town that once, many years ago, a boy appeared who really never had done these things—or at all events, which was all that was required or could be expected, had never been known to do them—and thus won the crown of glory. He was exhibited for three weeks afterwards in the Town Hall, under a glass case.

What has become of the money since no one knows. They say it is always handed over to the nearest wax-works show.

Shiplake is a pretty village, but it cannot be seen from the river, being upon the hill. Tennyson[Alfred, Lord Tennyson, English poet] was married in Shiplake Church.

The river up to Sonning winds in and out through many islands, and is very placid, hushed, and lonely. Few folk, except at twilight, a pair or two of rustic lovers, walk along its banks. 'Arry and Lord Fitznoodle [possibly indicating lower classes; *fitz*noodle can be separated into *fitz*, indicating an illegitimate son of a king or prince, and *noodle*, indicating a simpleton] have been left behind at Henley, and dismal, dirty Reading is not yet reached. It is a part of the river in which to dream of bygone days, and vanished forms and faces, and things that might have been, but



are not, confound them[in this context, Jerome means *damn them* indicating displeasure that these things did not come true].

We got out at Sonning, and went for a walk round the village. It



**Shiplake Church (St Peter and St. Paul's)**

is the most fairy-like little nook on the whole river. It is more like a stage village[think Hollywood film set] than one built of bricks and mortar. Every house is smothered in roses, and now, in early June, they were bursting forth in clouds of dainty splendour. If you stop at

Sonning, put up at the "Bull,"[also known as "The Bull Inn"] behind the church. It is a veritable[according to fact; true; real] picture of an old country inn, with green, square courtyard in front, where, on seats beneath the trees, the old men group of an evening[gather together for the night] to drink their ale and gossip over village politics; with low, quaint rooms and latticed windows, and awkward stairs and winding passages.

We roamed about sweet Sonning for an hour or so, and then, it being too late to push on past Reading, we decided to go back to one of the Shiplake islands, and put up there for the night. It was still early when we got settled, and George said that, as we had plenty of time, it would be a splendid opportunity to try a good, slap-up[lavish] supper. He said he would show us what could be done up the river in the way of cooking, and suggested that, with the vegetables and the remains of the cold beef and general odds and ends, we should make an Irish stew.



It seemed a fascinating idea. George gathered wood and made a fire, and Harris and I started to peel the potatoes. I should never have thought that peeling potatoes was such an undertaking. The job turned out to be the biggest thing of its kind that I had ever been in. We began cheerfully, one might almost say skittishly[without much thought], but our light-heartedness was gone by the time the first potato was finished. The more we peeled, the more peel there

seemed to be left on; by the time we had got all the peel off and all the eyes out, there was no potato left—at least none worth speaking of. George came and had a look at it—it was about the size of a peanut. He said:

"Oh, that won't do! You're wasting them. You must scrape them."

So we scraped them, and that was harder work than peeling. They are such an extraordinary shape, potatoes—all bumps and warts and hollows. We worked steadily for five-and-twenty minutes, and did four potatoes. Then we struck[went on strike; halted work for a period of time]. We said we should require the rest of the evening for scraping ourselves.

I never saw such a thing as potato-scraping for making a fellow in a mess. It seemed difficult to believe that the potato-scrapings in which Harris and I stood, half smothered, could have come off four potatoes. It shows you what can be done with economy and care.

George said it was absurd to have only four potatoes in an Irish stew, so we washed half-a-dozen or so more, and put them in without peeling. We also put in a cabbage and about half a peck[a peck is a dry measure equivalent to two gallons; here, one gallon] of peas. George stirred it all up, and then he said that there seemed to be a lot of room to spare, so we overhauled[turned over for examination] both the hampers, and picked out all the odds and ends and the remnants, and added them to the stew. There were half a pork pie and a bit of cold boiled bacon left, and we put them in. Then George found half a tin of potted[cooked in the tin] salmon, and he emptied that into the pot.

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He said that was the advantage of Irish stew: you got rid of such a lot of things. I fished out a couple of eggs that had got cracked, and put those in. George said they would thicken the gravy.

I forgot the other ingredients, but I know nothing was wasted; and I remember that, towards the end, Montmorency, who had evinced[showed clearly] great interest in the proceedings throughout, strolled away with an earnest and thoughtful air, reappearing, a few minutes afterwards, with a dead water-rat in his mouth, which he evidently wished to present as his contribution to the dinner; whether in a sarcastic spirit, or with a genuine desire to assist, I cannot say.

We had a discussion as to whether the rat should go in or not. Harris said that he thought it would be all right, mixed up with the other things, and that every little helped; but George stood up for precedent. He said he had never heard of water-rats in Irish stew, and he would rather be on the safe side, and not try experiments.

Harris said:

"If you never try a new thing, how can you tell what it's like? It's men such as you that hamper[impede] the world's progress. Think of the man who first tried German sausage!"

It was a great success, that Irish stew. I don't think I ever enjoyed a meal more. There was something so fresh and piquant[stimulating to the palate] about it. One's palate gets so tired of the old hackneyed[commonplace] things: here was a dish with a new flavour[flavor], with a taste like nothing else on earth.

And it was nourishing, too. As George said, there was good stuff in it. The peas and potatoes might have been a bit softer, but we all had good teeth, so that did not matter much: and as for the gravy, it was a poem—a little too rich, perhaps, for a weak stomach, but nutritious.

We finished up with tea and cherry tart. Montmorency had a fight with the kettle during tea-time, and came off a poor second.

Throughout the trip, he had manifested great curiosity concerning the kettle. He would sit and watch it, as it boiled, with a puzzled expression, and would try and rouse it every now and then by growling at it. When it began to sputter and steam, he regarded it as a



challenge, and would want to fight it, only, at that precise moment, some one would always dash up and bear off his prey before he could get at it.

To-day he determined he would be beforehand[ready and waiting]. At the first sound the kettle made, he rose, growling, and advanced towards it in a threatening attitude. It was only a little kettle, but it was full of pluck, and it up and spit at him.

"Ah! would ye[you]!" growled Montmorency, showing his teeth; "I'll teach ye to cheek[disrespect] a hard-working, respectable dog; ye miserable, long-nosed, dirty-looking scoundrel, ye. Come on!"

And he rushed at that poor little kettle, and seized it by the spout.

Then, across the evening stillness, broke a blood-curdling yelp, and Montmorency left the boat, and did a constitutional[exercise taken for the sake of health] three times round the island at the rate of thirty-five miles an hour, stopping every now and then to bury his nose in a bit of cool mud.

From that day Montmorency regarded the kettle with a mixture of awe, suspicion, and hate. Whenever he saw it he would growl and back[back away] at a rapid rate, with his tail shut down, and the moment it was put upon the stove he would promptly climb out of the boat, and sit on the bank, till the whole tea business was over.

George got out his banjo after supper, and wanted to play it, but Harris objected: he said he had got a headache, and did not feel strong enough to stand it. George thought the music might do him good—said music often soothed the nerves and took away a headache; and he twanged two or three notes, just to show Harris what it was like.

Harris said he would rather have the headache.

George has never learned to play the banjo to this day. He has had too much all-round discouragement to meet. He tried on two or three evenings, while we were up the river, to get a little practice, but it was never a success. Harris's language used to be enough to unnerve any man; added to which, Montmorency would sit and howl steadily, right through the performance. It was not giving the man a fair chance.

"What's he want to howl like that for when I'm playing?" George would exclaim indignantly, while taking aim at him with a boot.

"What do you want to play like that for when he is howling?" Harris would retort, catching the boot. "You let him alone. He can't help howling. He's got a musical ear, and your playing *makes* him howl."

So George determined to postpone study of the banjo until he reached home. But he did not get much opportunity even there. Mrs. P. used to come up and say she was very sorry—for herself, she liked to hear him—but the lady upstairs was in a very delicate state [in this context, pregnant], and the doctor was afraid it might injure the child.

Then George tried taking it out with him late at night, and practising [practicing] round the square. But the inhabitants complained to the police about it, and a watch was set for him one night, and he was captured. The evidence against him was very clear, and he was bound over [ordered by the court] to keep the peace for six months.

He seemed to lose heart in the business after that. He did make one or two feeble efforts to take up the work again when the six months had elapsed, but there was always the same coldness—the same want [lack] of sympathy on the part of the world to fight against; and, after awhile, he despaired altogether, and advertised the instrument for sale at a great sacrifice—"owner having no further use for same"—and took to learning card tricks instead.

It must be disheartening work learning a musical instrument. You would think that Society, for its own sake, would do all it could to assist a man to acquire the art of playing a musical instrument. But it doesn't!

I knew a young fellow once, who was studying to play the bagpipes, and you would be surprised at the amount of opposition he had to contend with. Why, not even from the members of his own family did he receive what you could call active encouragement. His father was dead against the business from the beginning, and spoke quite unfeelingly on the subject.

My friend used to get up early in the morning to practise [practice], but he had to give that plan up, because of his sister. She was somewhat religiously inclined, and she said it seemed such an awful thing to begin the day like that.

So he sat up at night instead, and played after the family had gone to bed, but that did not do, as it got the house such a bad name. People, going home late, would stop outside to listen, and then put it about all over the town, the next morning, that a fearful murder had been committed at Mr. Jefferson's the night before; and would describe how they had heard the victim's shrieks and the brutal oaths and curses of the murderer, followed by the prayer for mercy, and the last dying gurgle of the corpse.

So they let him practise in the day-time, in the back-kitchen with all the doors shut; but his more successful passages could generally be heard in the sitting-room, in spite of these precautions, and would affect his mother almost to tears.

She said it put her in mind of her poor father (he had been swallowed by a shark, poor man, while bathing off the coast of New Guinea—where the connection came in, she could not explain).

Then they knocked up [built] a little place for him at the bottom of the garden, about quarter of a mile from the house, and made him take the machine down there when he wanted to work it; and sometimes a visitor would come to the house who knew nothing of the matter, and they would forget to tell him all about it, and caution him, and he would go out for a stroll round the garden and suddenly get within earshot of those bagpipes, without being prepared for it, or knowing what it was. If he were a man of strong mind, it only gave him fits; but a person of mere average intellect it usually sent mad.



There is, it must be confessed, something very sad about the early efforts of an amateur in bagpipes. I have felt that myself when listening to my young friend. They appear to be a trying [difficult] instrument to perform upon. You have to get enough breath for the whole tune before you start—at least, so I gathered from watching Jefferson.

He would begin magnificently with a wild, full, come-to-the-battle sort of a note, that quite roused you. But he would get more and

more piano[musical term meaning to play softly] as he went on, and the last verse generally collapsed in the middle with a splutter and a hiss.

You want to be in good health to play the bagpipes.

Young Jefferson only learnt to play one tune on those bagpipes; but I never heard any complaints about the insufficiency of his repertoire—none whatever. This tune was "The Campbells are Coming, Hooray—Hooray!" so he said, though his father always held that it was "The Blue Bells of Scotland." Nobody seemed quite sure what it was exactly, but they all agreed that it sounded Scotch.

Strangers were allowed three guesses, and most of them guessed a different tune each time.

[

The song referred to above, *The Campbells are Coming*, is a Scottish song associated with Clan Campbell, one of the largest and most powerful of the Highland clans. The lyrics in their entirety appear below.

*Chorus:* The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!  
 The Campbells are coming to bonnie Lochleven  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!

Upon the Lomonds I lay, I lay,  
 Upon the Lomonds I lay, I lay,  
 I lookit[looked] down to bonnie Lochleven  
 And saw three perches[freshwater fish] play-hay-hay!  
*Chorus:* The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!  
 The Campbells are coming to bonnie Lochleven  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!

The Great Argyll[possibly Archibald Campbell,  
 the 5th Earl of Argyll] he goes before,  
 He makes the cannons and guns to roar,  
 With sound o'trumpet[of trumpet], pipe and drum,  
 The Campbells are coming, Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!

*Chorus:* The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!  
 The Campbells are coming to bonnie Lochleven  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!

The Campbells they are a' in arms[armed],  
 Their loyal faith and truth to show,  
 With banners rattling in the wind,  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!

*Chorus:* The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!  
 The Campbells are coming to bonnie Lochleven  
 The Campbells are coming Ho-Ro, Ho-Ro!

]

Harris was disagreeable after supper,—I think it must have been the stew that had upset him: he is not used to high living,—so George and I left him in the boat, and settled to go for a mouch round Henley. He said he should have a glass of whisky and a pipe, and fix things up for the night. We were to shout when we returned, and he would row over from the island and fetch us.

"Don't go to sleep, old man," we said as we started.

"Not much fear of that while this stew's on," he grunted, as he pulled back to the island.

Henley was getting ready for the regatta, and was full of bustle.



**Henley Regata**

We met a goodish number of men we knew about the town, and in their pleasant company the time slipped by somewhat quickly; so that it was nearly eleven o'clock before we set off on our four-mile walk home—as we had learned to call our little craft by this time.

It was a dismal night, coldish, with a thin rain falling; and as we trudged through the dark, silent fields, talking low to each other, and wondering if we were going right or not, we thought of the cosy boat, with the bright light streaming through the tight-drawn canvas; of Harris and Montmorency, and the whisky, and wished that we were there.

We conjured up the picture of ourselves inside, tired and a little hungry; of the gloomy river and the shapeless trees; and, like a giant glow-worm underneath them, our dear old boat, so snug and warm and cheerful. We could see ourselves at supper there, pecking away at cold meat, and passing each other chunks of bread; we could hear the cheery clatter of our knives, the laughing voices, filling all the space, and overflowing through the opening out into the night. And we hurried on to realise the vision.

We struck the tow-path at length, and that made us happy; because prior to this we had not been sure whether we were walking towards the river or away from it, and when you are tired and want to go to bed uncertainties like that worry you. We passed Skiplake as the clock was striking the quarter to twelve; and then George said, thoughtfully:

"You don't happen to remember which of the islands it was, do you?"

"No," I replied, beginning to grow thoughtful too, "I don't. How many are there?"

"Only four," answered George. "It will be all right, if he's awake."

"And if not?" I queried; but we dismissed that train of thought.

We shouted when we came opposite the first island, but there was no response; so we went to the second, and tried there, and obtained the same result.

"Oh! I remember now," said George; "it was the third one."

And we ran on hopefully to the third one, and hallooed [shouted].

No answer!

The case was becoming serious. It was now past midnight. The hotels at Skiplake and Henley would be crammed; and we could not go round, knocking up[knocking on doors of] cottagers and householders in the middle of the night, to know if they let apartments! George suggested walking back to Henley and assaulting a policeman, and so getting a night's lodging in the station-house. But then there was the thought, "Suppose he only hits us back and refuses to lock us up!"

We could not pass the whole night fighting policemen. Besides, we did not want to overdo the thing and get six months.

We despairingly tried what seemed in the darkness to be the fourth island, but met with no better success. The rain was coming down fast now, and evidently meant to last. We were wet to the skin, and cold and miserable. We began to wonder whether there were only four islands or more, or whether we were near the islands at all, or whether we were anywhere within a mile of where we ought to be, or in the wrong part of the river altogether; everything looked so strange and different in the darkness. We began to understand the sufferings of the Babes in the Wood[a traditional English children's story about two children abandoned by their uncle in the woods to die...the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a laugh-a-minute. See Appendix A for the original poem.].

Just when we had given up all hope—yes, I know that is always the time that things do happen in novels and tales; but I can't help it. I resolved, when I began to write this book, that I would be strictly truthful in all things; and so I will be, even if I have to employ hackneyed phrases for the purpose.

It *was* just when we had given up all hope, and I must therefore say so. Just when we had given up all hope, then, I suddenly caught sight, a little way below us, of a strange, weird sort of glimmer flickering among the trees on the opposite bank. For an instant I thought of ghosts: it was such a shadowy, mysterious light. The next moment it flashed across me that it was our boat, and I sent up such a yell across the water that made the night seem to shake in its bed.

We waited breathless for a minute, and then—oh! divinest music of the darkness!—we heard the answering bark of Montmorency. We shouted back loud enough to wake the Seven Sleepers[a medieval legend about a group of youths who hid in a cave outside the city of Ephesus (in Turkey) around 250 A.D. to escape one of the Roman persecutions of Christians and emerged some 300 years later]—I never

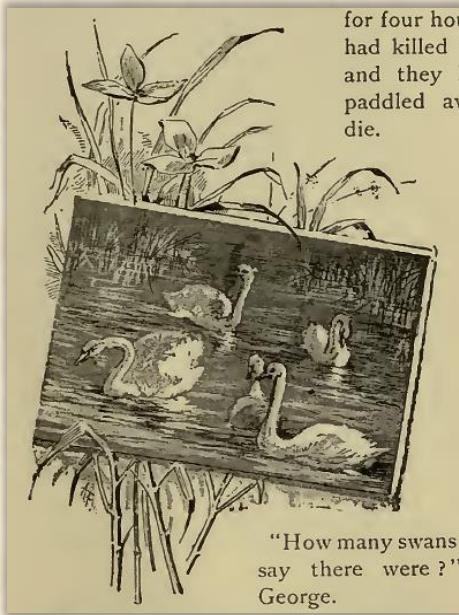
could understand myself why it should take more noise to wake seven sleepers than one—and, after what seemed an hour, but what was really, I suppose, about five minutes, we saw the lighted boat creeping slowly over the blackness, and heard Harris's sleepy voice asking where we were.

There was an unaccountable strangeness about Harris. It was something more than mere ordinary tiredness. He pulled the boat against a part of the bank from which it was quite impossible for us to get into it, and immediately went to sleep. It took us an immense amount of screaming and roaring to wake him up again and put some sense into him; but we succeeded at last, and got safely on board.

Harris had a sad expression on him, so we noticed, when we got into the boat. He gave you the idea of a man who had been through trouble. We asked him if anything had happened, and he said—

"Swans!"

It seemed we had moored close to a swan's nest, and, soon after George and I had gone, the female swan came back, and kicked up a row about it. Harris had chivied her off, and she had gone away, and fetched up her old man. Harris said he had had quite a fight with these two swans; but courage and skill had prevailed in the end, and he had defeated them.



Half-an-hour afterwards they returned with eighteen other swans! It must have been a fearful battle, so far as we could understand Harris's account of it. The swans had tried to drag him and Montmorency out of the boat and drown them; and he had defended himself like a hero for four hours, and had killed the lot, and they had all paddled away to die.

"How many swans did you say there were?" asked George.

"Thirty-two," replied Harris, sleepily.

"You said eighteen just now," said George.

"No, I didn't," grunted Harris; "I said twelve. Think I can't count?"

What were the real facts about these swans we never found out. We questioned Harris on the subject in the morning, and he said, "What swans?" and seemed to think that George and I had been dreaming.

Oh, how delightful it was to be safe in the boat, after our trials and fears! We ate a hearty supper, George and I, and we should have had some toddy[a mixture of whiskey, sugar and hot water] after it, if we could have found the whisky, but we could not. We examined Harris as to what he had done with it; but he did not seem to know what we meant by "whisky," or what we were talking about at all. Montmorency looked as if he knew something, but said nothing.

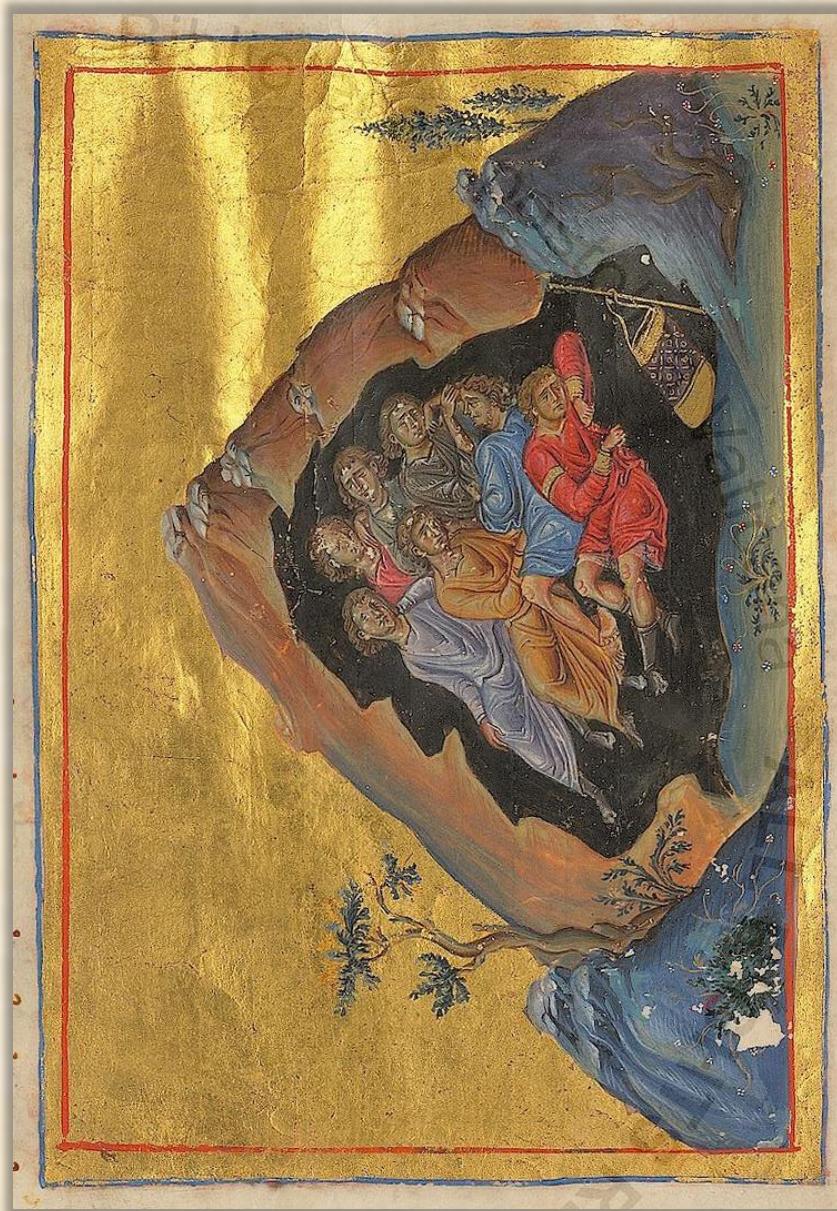
I slept well that night, and should have slept better if it had not been for Harris. I have a vague recollection of having been woken up at least a dozen times during the night by Harris wandering about the boat with the lantern, looking for his clothes. He seemed to be worrying about his clothes all night.

Twice he routed[forced] up George and myself to see if we were lying on his trousers. George got quite wild the second time.

"What the thunder do you want your trousers for, in the middle of the night?" he asked indignantly. "Why don't you lie down, and go to sleep?"

I found him in trouble, the next time I awoke, because he could not find his socks; and my last hazy remembrance is of being rolled over on my side, and of hearing Harris muttering something about its being an extraordinary thing where his umbrella could have got to.





The Seven Sleepers



Francis Seymour Haden (English, 1818-1910)

*Sunset on the Thames*, c. 1865

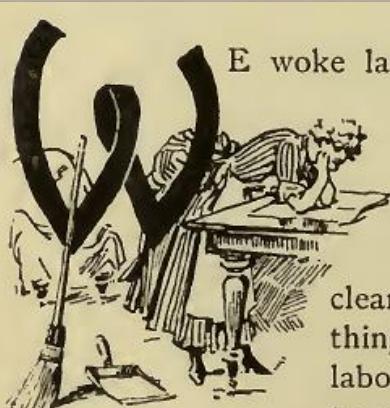
Etching and drypoint on ivory laid paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XV

*Household duties.—Love of work.—The old river hand, what he does and what he tells you he has done.—Scepticism of the new generation.—Early boating recollections.—Rafting.—George does the thing in style.—*

*The old boatman, his method.—So calm, so full of peace.—The beginner.—Punting.—A sad accident.—Pleasures of friendship.—Sailing, my first experience.—Possible reason why we were not drowned.*



E woke late the next morning, and, at Harris's earnest desire, partook of a plain breakfast, with "non dainties." Then we cleaned up, and put everything straight (a continual labor, which was beginning to afford me a pretty clear

insight into a question that had often posed me—namely, how a woman with the work of only one house on her hands manages to

pass away her time), and, at about ten, set out on what we had determined should be a good day's journey.

We agreed that we would pull this morning, as a change from towing; and Harris thought the best arrangement would be that George and I should scull, and he steer. I did not chime in with this idea at all; I said I thought Harris would have been showing a more proper spirit if he had suggested that he and George should work, and let me rest a bit. It seemed to me that I was doing more than my fair share of the work on this trip, and I was beginning to feel strongly on the subject.

It always does seem to me that I am doing more work than I should do. It is not that I object to the work, mind you; I like work: it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours. I love to keep it by me: the idea of getting rid of it nearly breaks my heart.

You cannot give me too much work; to accumulate work has almost become a passion with me: my study is so full of it now, that there is hardly an inch of room for any more. I shall have to throw out a wing[to expand the study; to construct an addition; here, wing takes on the meaning *section of a building*] soon.

And I am careful of my work, too. Why, some of the work that I have by me now has been in my possession for years and years, and there isn't a finger-mark on it. I take a great pride in my work; I take it down now and then and dust it. No man keeps his work in a better state of preservation than I do.

But, though I crave for work, I still like to be fair. I do not ask for more than my proper share.

But I get it without asking for it—at least, so it appears to me—and this worries me.

George says he does not think I need trouble myself on the subject. He thinks it is only my over-scrupulous[in this context, *concern with moral correctness; very careful* is another meaning, but the line is more humorous with the first definition] nature that makes me fear I am having more than my due; and that, as a matter of fact, I don't have half as much as I ought. But I expect he only says this to comfort me.

In a boat, I have always noticed that it is the fixed idea of each member of the crew that he is doing everything. Harris's notion was, that it was he alone who had been working, and that both George

and I had been imposing upon him. George, on the other hand, ridiculed the idea of Harris's having done anything more than eat and sleep, and had a cast-iron[very strong; solid] opinion that it was he—George himself—who had done all the labour[labor] worth speaking of.

He said he had never been out with such a couple of lazily skulks[people who avoid duty] as Harris and I.

That amused Harris.

"Fancy old George talking about work!" he laughed; "why, about half-an-hour of it would kill him. Have you ever seen George work?" he added, turning to me.

I agreed with Harris that I never had—most certainly not since we had started on this trip.

"Well, I don't see how *you* can know much about it, one way or the other," George retorted on Harris; "for I'm blest if you haven't been asleep half the time. Have you ever seen Harris fully awake, except at meal-time?" asked George, addressing me.

Truth compelled me to support George. Harris had been very little good in the boat, so far as helping was concerned, from the beginning.

"Well, hang it all, I've done more than old J., anyhow," rejoined Harris.

"Well, you couldn't very well have done less," added George.

"I suppose J. thinks he is the passenger," continued Harris.

And that was their gratitude to me for having brought them and their wretched old boat all the way up from Kingston, and for having superintended and managed everything for them, and taken care of them, and slaved for them. It is the way of the world.

We settled the present difficulty by arranging that Harris and George should scull up past Reading, and that I should tow the boat on from there. Pulling a heavy boat against a strong stream has few attractions for me now. There was a time, long ago, when I used to clamour for the hard work: now I like to give the youngsters a chance.



I notice that most of the old river hands are similarly retiring[relaxed], whenever there is any stiff[strong] pulling to be done. You can always tell the old river hand by the way in which he stretches himself out upon the cushions at the bottom of the boat, and encourages the rowers by telling them anecdotes about the marvellous[marvelous] feats he performed last season.

"Call what you're doing hard work!" he drawls, between his contented whiffs, addressing the two perspiring novices, who have been grinding away steadily up stream for the last hour and a half; "why, Jim Biffles and Jack and I, last season, pulled up from Marlow to Goring in one afternoon—never stopped once. Do you remember that, Jack?"

Jack, who has made himself a bed up in the prow of all the rugs and coats he can collect, and who has been lying there asleep for the last two hours, partially wakes up on being thus appealed to, and recollects all about the matter, and also remembers that there was an unusually strong stream against them all the way—likewise a stiff wind.

"About thirty-four miles, I suppose, it must have been," adds the first speaker, reaching down another cushion to put under his head.

"No—no; don't exaggerate, Tom," murmurs Jack, reprovingly; "thirty-three at the outside."

And Jack and Tom, quite exhausted by this conversational effort, drop off to sleep once more. And the two simple-minded youngsters at the sculls feel quite proud of being allowed to row such wonderful oarsmen as Jack and Tom, and strain away harder than ever.



Sleeping Sailor by Henry Scott Tuke (1905)



When I was a young man, I used to listen to these tales from my elders, and take them in, and swallow them, and digest every word of them, and then come up for more; but the new generation do not seem to have the simple faith of the old times. We—George, Harris, and myself—took a "raw 'un"[raw one; novice] up with us once last season, and we plied him with the customary stretchers about the wonderful things we had done all the way up.

We gave him all the regular ones—the time-honoured lies that have done duty up the river with every boating-man for years past—and added seven entirely original ones that we had invented for ourselves, including a really quite likely story, founded, to a certain extent, on an all but true episode, which had actually happened in a modified degree some years ago to friends of ours—a story that a mere child could have believed without injuring itself, much.

And that young man mocked at them all, and wanted us to repeat the feats then and there, and to bet us ten to one that we didn't.

We got to chatting about our rowing experiences this morning, and to recounting stories of our first efforts in the art of oarsmanship. My own earliest boating recollection is of five of us contributing threepence each and taking out a curiously constructed craft on the Regent's Park lake, drying ourselves subsequently, in the park-keeper's lodge.

After that, having acquired a taste for the water, I did a good deal of rafting in various suburban brickfields—an exercise providing more interest and excitement than might be imagined, especially when you are in the middle of the pond and the proprietor of the materials of which the raft is constructed suddenly appears on the bank, with a big stick in his hand.

Your first sensation on seeing this gentleman is that, somehow or other, you don't feel equal to company and conversation, and that, if you could do so without appearing rude, you would rather avoid meeting him; and your object is, therefore, to get off on the opposite side of the pond to which he is, and to go home quietly and quickly, pretending not to see him. He, on the contrary, is yearning to take you by the hand, and talk to you.

It appears that he knows your father, and is intimately acquainted with yourself, but this does not draw you towards him. He says he'll teach you to take his boards and make a raft of them; but, seeing that you know how to do this pretty well already, the offer, though

doubtless kindly meant, seems a superfluous[useless] one on his part, and you are reluctant to put him to any trouble by accepting it.

His anxiety to meet you, however, is proof against all your coolness, and the energetic manner in which he dodges up and down the pond so as to be on the spot to greet you when you land is really quite flattering.

If he be of a stout and short-winded build, you can easily avoid his advances; but, when he is of the youthful and long-legged type, a meeting is inevitable. The interview is, however, extremely brief, most of the conversation being on his part, your remarks being mostly of an exclamatory[abrupt comment] and monosyllabic[words consisting of one syllable] order, and as soon as you can tear yourself away you do so.

I devoted some three months to rafting, and, being then as proficient as there was any need to be at that branch of the art, I determined to go in for rowing proper, and joined one of the Lea[River Lea] boating clubs.

Being out in a boat on the river Lea, especially on Saturday afternoons, soon makes you smart at handling a craft, and spry at escaping being run down by roughs or swamped by barges; and it also affords plenty of opportunity for acquiring the most prompt and graceful method of lying down flat at the bottom of the boat so as to avoid being chucked out into the river by passing tow-lines.

But it does not give you style. It was not till I came to the Thames that I got style. My style of rowing is very much admired now. People say it is so quaint.

George never went near the water until he was sixteen. Then he and eight other gentlemen of about the same age went down in a body to Kew[a district in the London borough of Richmond-upon-



Hyde Park by Camille Pissarro (1890)

Thames.] one Saturday, with the idea of hiring a boat there, and pulling to Richmond and back; one of their number, a shock-headed youth, named Joskins, who had once or twice taken out a boat on the Serpentine[a 40-acre recreational lake in Hyde Park, London], told them it was jolly fun, boating!

The tide was running out pretty rapidly when they reached the landing-stage, and there was a stiff breeze blowing across the river, but this did not trouble them at all, and they proceeded to select their boat.

There was an eight-oared racing outrigger[a boat with a projecting structure whose design and functionality depends on the type of boat; for example, a device to hold an oar away from the boat preventing the oarsman from hitting the boat itself] drawn up on the stage; that was the one that took their fancy. They said they'd have that one, please.



**Eight-Oared Outrigger (notice projections holding oars away from boat)**

The boatman was away, and only his boy was in charge. The boy tried to damp their ardour[ardor; eagerness] for the outrigger, and showed them two or three very comfortable-looking boats of the family-party build, but those would not do at all; the outrigger was the boat they thought they would look best in.

So the boy launched it, and they took off their coats and prepared to take their seats. The boy suggested that George, who, even in

those days, was always the heavy man of any party, should be number four. George said he should be happy to be number four, and promptly stepped into bow's place, and sat down with his back to the stern. They got him into his proper position at last, and then the others followed.

A particularly nervous boy was appointed cox[short for coxswain (pronounced *kok-suhn*); the member who does not row but, facing forward, steers the boat and motivates the other members by, among other things, questioning their family heritage and lack of fashion sense], and the steering principle explained to him by Joskins. Joskins himself took stroke. He told the others that it was simple enough; all they had to do was to follow him.

They said they were ready, and the boy on the landing stage took a boat-hook and shoved him off.

What then followed George is unable to describe in detail. He has a confused recollection of having, immediately on starting, received a violent blow in the small of the back from the butt-end of number five's scull, at the same time that his own seat seemed to disappear from under him by magic, and leave him sitting on the boards. He also noticed, as a curious circumstance, that number two was at the same instant lying on his back at the bottom of the boat, with his legs in the air, apparently in a fit.

They passed under Kew Bridge, broadside[the side of the boat, as opposed to the bow], at the rate of eight miles an hour. Joskins being the only one who was rowing. George, on recovering his seat, tried to help him, but, on dipping his oar into the water, it immediately, to his intense surprise, disappeared under the boat, and nearly took him



Kew Bridge

with it.

And then "cox" threw both rudder lines overboard, and burst into tears.

How they got back George never knew, but it took them just forty minutes. A dense crowd watched the entertainment from Kew Bridge with much interest, and everybody shouted out to them different directions. Three times they managed to get the boat back through the arch, and three times they were carried under it again, and every time "cox" looked up and saw the bridge above him he broke out into renewed sobs.

George said he little thought that afternoon that he should ever come to really like boating.

Harris is more accustomed to sea rowing than to river work, and says that, as an exercise, he prefers it. I don't. I remember taking a small boat out at Eastbourne last summer: I used to do a good deal of sea rowing years ago, and I thought I should be all right; but I found I had forgotten the art entirely. When one scull was deep down underneath the water, the other would be flourishing wildly about in the air. To get a grip of the water with both at the same time I

had to stand up. The parade was crowded with nobility and gentry, and I had to pull past them in this ridiculous fashion. I landed half-way down the beach, and secured the services of an old boatman to take me back.

I like to watch an old boatman rowing, especially one who has been hired by the hour. There is something so beautifully calm and restful about his method. It is so free from that fretful[restless] haste, that vehement[powerful] striving, that is every day becoming more and more the bane of nineteenth century[and twentieth century, and twenty-first century, etc.] life. He is not forever straining himself to pass all the other boats. If another boat overtakes him and passes him it does not annoy him; as a matter of fact, they all do overtake him and pass him—all those that are going his way. This would trouble and irritate some people; the sublime[majestic] equanimity [composure] of the hired boatman under the ordeal affords us a beautiful lesson against ambition and uppishness.



Plain practical rowing of the get-the-boat-along order is not a very difficult art to acquire, but it takes a good deal of practice before a man feels comfortable, when rowing past girls. It is the "time" that worries a youngster. "It's jolly funny," he says, as for the twentieth time within five minutes he disentangles his sculls from yours; "I can get on all right when I'm by myself!"

To see two novices try to keep time with one another is very amusing. Bow finds it impossible to keep pace with stroke, because stroke rows in such an extraordinary fashion. Stroke is intensely indignant at this, and explains that what he has been endeavouring to do for the last ten minutes is to adapt his method to bow's limited capacity. Bow, in turn, then becomes insulted, and requests stroke not to trouble his head about him (bow), but to devote his mind to setting a sensible stroke.



"Or, shall *I* take stroke?" he adds, with the evident idea that that would at once put the whole matter right.

They splash along for another hundred yards with still moderate success, and then the whole secret of their trouble bursts upon stroke like a flash of inspiration.

"I tell you what it is: you've got my sculls," he cries, turning to bow; "pass yours over."

"Well, do you know, I've been wondering how it was I couldn't get on with these," answers bow, quite brightening up, and most willingly assisting in the exchange. "Now we shall be all right."

But they are not—not even then. Stroke has to stretch his arms nearly out of their sockets to reach his sculls now; while bow's pair, at each recovery, hit him a violent blow in the chest. So they change back again, and come to the conclusion that the man has given them the wrong set altogether; and over their mutual abuse of this man they become quite friendly and sympathetic.

George said he had often longed to take to punting for a change. Punting is not as easy as it looks. As in rowing, you soon learn how to get along and handle the craft, but it takes long practice before you

can do this with dignity and without getting the water all up your sleeve.

One young man I knew had a very sad accident happen to him the first time he went punting. He had been getting on so well that he had grown quite cheeky over the business, and was walking up and down the punt, working his pole with a careless grace that was quite fascinating to watch. Up he would march to the head of the punt, plant his pole, and then run along right to the other end, just like an old punter. Oh! it was grand.

And it would all have gone on being grand if he had not unfortunately, while looking round to enjoy the scenery, taken just one step more than there was any necessity for, and walked off the punt altogether. The pole was firmly fixed in the mud, and he was left clinging to it while the punt drifted away. It was an undignified position for him. A rude boy on the bank immediately yelled out to a lagging chum to "hurry up and see a real monkey on a stick."

I could not go to his assistance, because, as ill-luck would have it, we had not taken the proper precaution to bring out a spare pole with us. I could only sit and look at him. His expression as the pole slowly sank with him I shall never forget; there was so much thought in it.

I watched him gently let down into the water, and saw him scramble out, sad and wet. I could not help laughing, he looked such a ridiculous figure. I continued to chuckle to myself about it for some time, and then it was suddenly forced in upon me that really I had got very little to laugh at when I came to think of it. Here was I, alone in a punt, without a pole, drifting helplessly down mid-stream—possibly towards a weir.

I began to feel very indignant with my friend for having stepped overboard and gone off in that way. He might, at all events, have left me the pole.

I drifted on for about a quarter of a mile, and then I came in sight of a fishing-punt moored in mid-stream, in which sat two old fishermen. They saw me bearing down upon them, and they called out to me to keep out of their way.



"I can't," I shouted back.

"But you don't try," they answered.

I explained the matter to them when I got nearer, and they caught me and lent me a pole. The weir was just fifty yards below. I am glad they happened to be there.



Punting on the Avon

The first time I went punting was in company with three other fellows; they were going to show me how to do it. We could not all start together, so I said I would go down first and get out the punt, and then I could potter about and practice a bit until they came.

I could not get a punt out that afternoon, they were all engaged; so I had nothing else to do but to sit down on the bank, watching the river, and waiting for my friends.

I had not been sitting there long before my attention became attracted to a man in a punt who, I noticed with some surprise, wore a jacket and cap exactly like mine. He was evidently a novice at punting, and his performance was most interesting. You never knew what was going to happen when he put the pole in; he evidently did not know himself. Sometimes he shot up stream and sometimes he shot down stream, and at other times he simply spun round and came up the other side of the pole. And with every result he seemed equally surprised and annoyed.

The people about the river began to get quite absorbed in him after a while, and to make bets with one another as to what would be the outcome of his next push.

In the course of time my friends arrived on the opposite bank, and they stopped and watched him too. His back was towards them, and they only saw his jacket and cap. From this they immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was I, their beloved companion, who was making an exhibition of himself, and their delight knew no bounds. They commenced to chaff[*to tease*] him unmercifully.

I did not grasp their mistake at first, and I thought, "How rude of them to go on like that, with a perfect stranger, too!" But before I could call out and reprove[*condemn*] them, the explanation of the matter occurred to me, and I withdrew behind a tree.

Oh, how they enjoyed themselves, ridiculing that young man! For five good minutes they stood there, shouting ribaldry[*obscenity*] at him, deriding him, mocking him, jeering at him. They peppered him with stale jokes, they even made a few new ones and threw at him. They hurled at him all the private family jokes belonging to our set, and which must have been perfectly unintelligible to him. And then, unable to stand their brutal jibes any longer, he turned round on them, and they saw his face!

I was glad to notice that they had sufficient decency left in them to look very foolish. They explained to him that they had thought he was some one they knew. They said they hoped he would not deem them capable of so insulting any one except a personal friend of their own.

Of course their having mistaken him for a friend excused it. I remember Harris telling me once of a bathing experience he had at Boulogne[*coastal city in northern France*]. He was swimming about there near the beach, when he felt himself suddenly seized by the neck from behind, and forcibly plunged under water. He struggled violently, but whoever had got hold of him seemed to be a perfect Hercules in strength, and all his efforts to escape were unavailing. He had given up kicking, and was trying to turn his thoughts upon solemn things, when his captor released him.



He regained his feet, and looked round for his would-be murderer. The assassin was standing close by him, laughing heartily, but the moment he caught sight of Harris's face, as it emerged from the water, he started back and seemed quite concerned.

"I really beg your pardon," he stammered confusedly, "but I took you for a friend of mine!"

Harris thought it was lucky for him the man had not mistaken him for a relation, or he would probably have been drowned outright.

Sailing is a thing that wants knowledge and practice too—though, as a boy, I did not think so. I had an idea it came natural to a body, like rounders[similar to American baseball] and touch[similar to the game of It]. I knew another boy who held this view likewise, and so, one windy day, we thought we would try the sport. We were stopping down at Yarmouth, and we decided we would go for a trip up the Yare[river in the English county of Norfolk]. We hired a sailing boat at the yard by the bridge, and started off.

"It's rather a rough day," said the man to us, as we put off: "better take in a reef[a portion of a sail that can be pulled or drawn together] and luff[to turn a ship towards the wind] sharp when you get round the bend."

We said we would make a point of it, and left him with a cheery "Good-morning," wondering to ourselves how you "luffed," and where we were to get a "reef" from, and what we were to do with it when we had got it.

We rowed until we were out of sight of the town, and then, with a wide stretch of water in front of us, and the wind blowing a perfect hurricane across it, we felt that the time had come to commence operations.

Hector—I think that was his name—went on pulling while I unrolled the sail. It seemed a complicated job, but I accomplished it at length, and then came the question, which was the top end?

By a sort of natural instinct, we, of course, eventually decided that the bottom was the top, and set to work to fix it upside-down. But it was a long time before we could get it up, either that way or any other way. The impression on the mind of the sail seemed to be that we were playing at funerals, and that I was the corpse and itself was

the winding-sheet[sheet or shroud in which a corpse is wound up; wind is pronounced with a long i].

When it found that this was not the idea, it hit me over the head with the boom, and refused to do anything.

"Wet it," said Hector; "drop it over and get it wet."

He said people in ships always wetted the sails before they put them up. So I wetted it; but that only made matters worse than they were before. A dry sail clinging to your legs and wrapping itself round your head is not pleasant, but, when the sail is sopping wet, it becomes quite vexing[irritating].

We did get the thing up at last, the two of us together. We fixed it, not exactly upside down—more sideways like—and we tied it up to the mast with the painter[a rope used to fasten a boat to something], which we cut off for the purpose.

That the boat did not upset I simply state as a fact. Why it did not upset I am unable to offer any reason. I have often thought about the matter since, but I have never succeeded in arriving at any satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon.

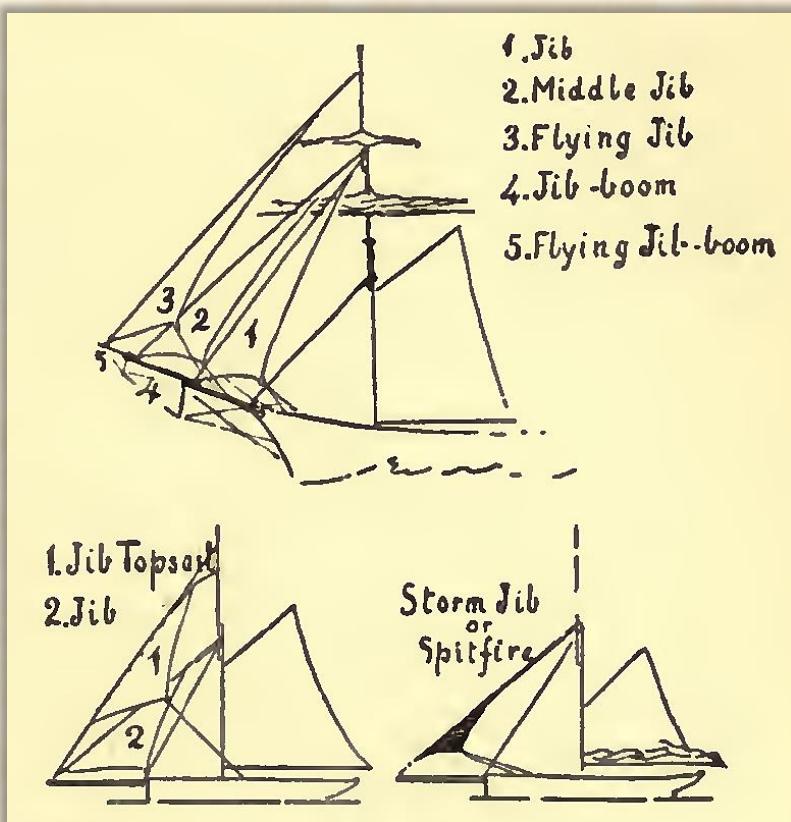
Possibly the result may have been brought about by the natural obstinacy of all things in this world. The boat may possibly have come to the conclusion, judging from a cursory[hasty] view of our behaviour, that we had come out for a morning's suicide, and had thereupon determined to disappoint us. That is the only suggestion I can offer.

By clinging like grim death to the gunwale, we just managed to keep inside the boat, but it was exhausting work. Hector said that pirates and other seafaring people generally lashed the rudder to something or other, and hauled in the main top-jib[top of a triangular-shaped sail], during severe squalls[violent gusts of wind], and thought we ought to try to do something of the kind; but I was for letting her have her head to the wind.

As my advice was by far the easiest to follow, we ended by adopting it, and contrived to embrace the gunwale and give her her head.

The boat travelled up stream for about a mile at a pace I have never sailed at since, and don't want to again. Then, at a bend, she heeled over till half her sail was under water. Then she righted herself by a miracle and flew for a long low bank of soft mud.

That mud-bank saved us. The boat ploughed[moved through] its way into the middle of it and then stuck. Finding that we were once more able to move according to our ideas, instead of being pitched and thrown about like peas in a bladder[*bag*], we crept forward, and cut down the sail.



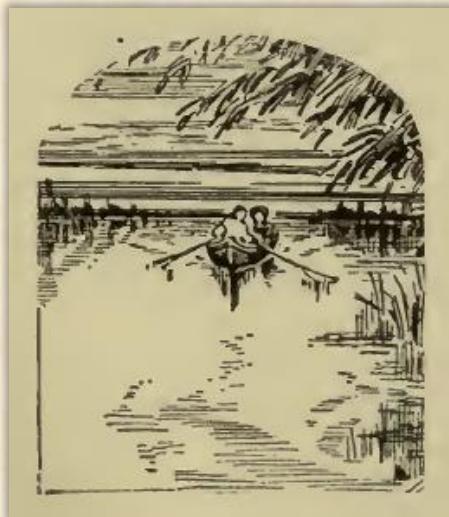
We had had enough sailing. We did not want to overdo the thing and get a surfeit[*excess*] of it. We had had a sail—a good all-round exciting, interesting sail—and now we thought we would have a row, just for a change like.

We took the sculls and tried to push the boat off the mud, and, in doing so, we broke one of the sculls. After that we proceeded with great caution, but they were a wretched old pair, and the second one cracked almost easier than the first, and left us helpless.

The mud stretched out for about a hundred yards in front of us, and behind us was the water. The only thing to be done was to sit and wait until someone came by.

It was not the sort of day to attract people out on the river, and it was three hours before a soul came in sight. It was an old fisherman who, with immense difficulty, at last rescued us, and we were towed back in an ignominious[dishonorable] fashion to the boat-yard.

What between tipping the man who had brought us home, and paying for the broken sculls, and for having been out four hours and a half, it cost us a pretty considerable number of weeks' pocket-money, that sail. But we learned experience, and they say that is always cheap at any price.





St George and the Dragon (1502) by Vittore Carpaccio



James McNeill Whistler (American, 1834-1903)

*Thames Police*, 1859

Etching and drypoint with foul biting in black ink on ivory laid paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XVI

*Reading.—We are towed by steam launch.—Irritating behaviour of small boats.—How they get in the way of steam launches.—George and Harris again shirk their work.—Rather a hackneyed story.—Streatley and Goring.*

e came in sight of Reading about eleven. The river is dirty and dismal here. One does not linger in the neighbourhood of Reading. The town itself is a famous old place, dating from the dim days of King Ethelred [Ethelred I, king of Wessex from 865 until his death in his early 20s in 871], when the Danes anchored their warships in the Kennet [a tributary of the Thames in southern England], and started from Reading to ravage all the land of Wessex; and here Ethelred and his brother Alfred fought and defeated them, Ethelred doing the praying and Alfred the fighting.

In later years, Reading seems to have been regarded as a handy place to run down to, when matters were becoming unpleasant in London. Parliament generally rushed off to Reading whenever there was a plague [an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*; symptoms include death] on at Westminster; and, in 1625, the Law followed suit, and all the courts were held at Reading [because of the plague in London]. It must have been worthwhile having a mere ordinary plague *now and then* in London to get rid of both the lawyers and the Parliament.

During the Parliamentary struggle, Reading was besieged [Siege of Reading lasting eleven days: 14 April 1643 to 25 April 1643] by the Earl of

Essex[Robert Devereux, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Essex], and, a quarter of a century later, the Prince of Orange[William III, king of England, reigned from 1689 to 1702] routed King James's troops there[Battle of Reading, an easy-peasy one-day dust-up on 9 December 1688].

Henry I[king of England from 5 August 1100 to 1 December 1135] lies buried at Reading, in the Benedictine abbey founded by him there, the ruins of which may still be seen; and, in this same abbey, great John of Gaunt[Duke of Lancaster, English royal prince, military leader and statesman] was married to the Lady Blanche[Blanche of Lancaster].



**Reading Abbey (Benedictine)**

At Reading lock we came up with a steam launch, belonging to some friends of mine, and they towed us up to within about a mile of Streatley. It is very delightful being towed up by a launch. I prefer it myself to rowing. The run would have been more delightful still, if it had not been for a lot of wretched small boats that were continually getting in the way of our launch, and, to avoid running down which, we had to be continually easing and stopping. It is really most annoying, the manner in which these rowing boats get in the way of one's launch up the river; something ought to be done to stop it.



And they are so confoundedly impertinent, too, over it. You can whistle till you nearly burst your boiler before they will trouble themselves to hurry. I would have one or two of them run down now and then, if I had my way, just to teach them all a lesson.

The river becomes very lovely from a little above Reading. The railway rather spoils it near Tilehurst, but from Mapledurham up to Streatley it is glorious. A little above Mapledurham lock you pass Hardwick House, where Charles I [king of England from 27 March 1625 to 30 January 1649] played bowls [vaguely similar to modern day bowling except the thrown ball must stop as close as possible to a smaller ball designated the *jack* or *kitty*; the thrown ball is biased causing it to occasionally roll in a non-linear [not in a straight line] fashion]. The neighbourhood of Pangbourne, where the quaint little Swan Inn stands, must be as familiar to the *habitues* [frequent visitors] of the Art Exhibitions as it is to its own inhabitants.



My friends' launch cast us loose just below the grotto, and then Harris wanted to make out that it was my turn to pull. This seemed to me most unreasonable. It had been arranged in the morning that I should bring the boat up to three miles above Reading. Well, here we were, ten miles above Reading! Surely it was now their turn again.

I could not get either George or Harris to see the matter in its proper light, however; so, to save argument, I took the sculls. I had not been pulling for more than a minute or so, when George noticed something black floating on the water, and we drew up to it. George leant over, as we neared it, and laid hold of it. And then he drew back with a cry, and a blanched [whitened, as if by fear] face.

It was the dead body of a woman. It lay very lightly on the water, and the face was sweet and calm. It was not a beautiful face; it was too prematurely aged-looking, too thin and drawn, to be that; but it was a gentle, lovable face, in spite of its stamp [mark] of pinch [oppression; distress; pain] and poverty, and upon it was that look of restful peace that comes to the faces of the sick sometimes when at last the pain has left them.

Fortunately for us—we having no desire to be kept hanging about coroners' courts—some men on the bank had seen the body too, and



now took charge of it from us.

We found out the woman's story afterwards. Of course it was the old, old vulgar tragedy. She had loved and been deceived—or had deceived herself. Anyhow, she had sinned—some of us do now and then—and her family and friends, naturally shocked and indignant, had closed their doors against her.

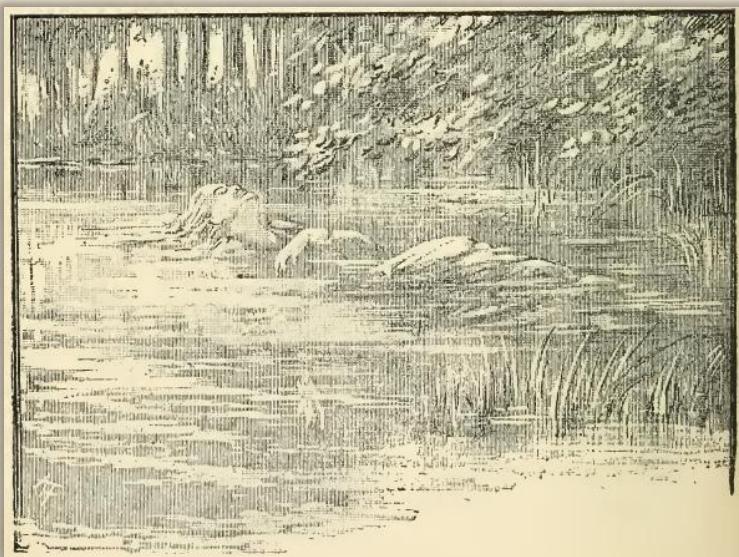
Left to fight the world alone, with the millstone[burden] of her shame around her neck, she had sunk ever lower and lower. For a while she had kept both herself and the child on the twelve shillings a week that twelve hours' drudgery[hard work] a day procured[obtained] her, paying six shillings out of it for the child, and keeping her own body and soul together on the remainder.

Six shillings a week does not keep body and soul together very unitedly. They want to get away from each other when there is only such a very slight bond as that between them; and one day, I suppose, the pain and the dull monotony[lack of variety] of it all had stood before her eyes plainer than usual, and the mocking spectre[usually, ghost, but here meaning a mental image of something unpleasant] had frightened her. She had made one last appeal to friends, but, against the chill wall of their respectability, the voice of the erring[doing wrong; sinning] outcast fell unheeded; and then she had gone to see her child—had held it in her arms and kissed it, in a weary, dull sort of way, and without betraying any particular emotion of any kind, and had left it, after putting into its hand a penny box of chocolate she had bought it, and afterwards, with her last few shillings, had taken a ticket and come down to Goring.

It seemed that the bitterest thoughts of her life must have centred about the wooded reaches and the bright green meadows around Goring; but women strangely hug the knife that stabs them, and, perhaps, amidst the gall[anger], there may have mingled also sunny memories of sweetest hours, spent upon those shadowed deeps over which the great trees bend their branches down so low.

She had wandered about the woods by the river's brink[edge] all day, and then, when evening fell and the grey twilight spread its dusky robe upon the waters, she stretched her arms out to the silent river that had known her sorrow and her joy. And the old river had taken her into its gentle arms, and had laid her weary head upon its bosom, and had hushed away the pain.

Thus had she sinned in all things—sinned in living and in dying. God help her! and all other sinners, if any more there be.

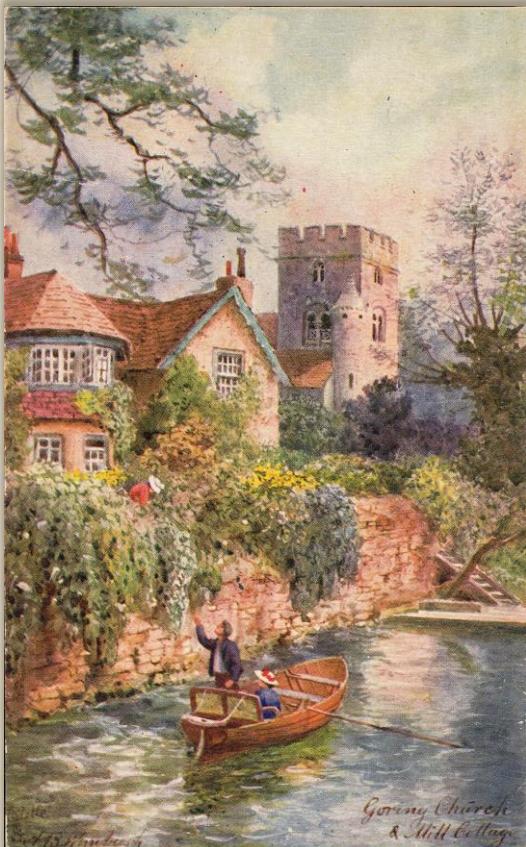


Goring on the left bank and Streatley on the right are both or either charming places to stay at for a few days. The reaches down to Pangbourne woo[entice] one for a sunny sail or for a moonlight row, and the country round about is full of beauty. We had intended to push on to Wallingford that day, but the sweet smiling face of the river here lured us to linger for a while; and so we left our boat at the bridge, and went up into Streatley, and lunched at the "Bull," much to Montmorency's satisfaction.

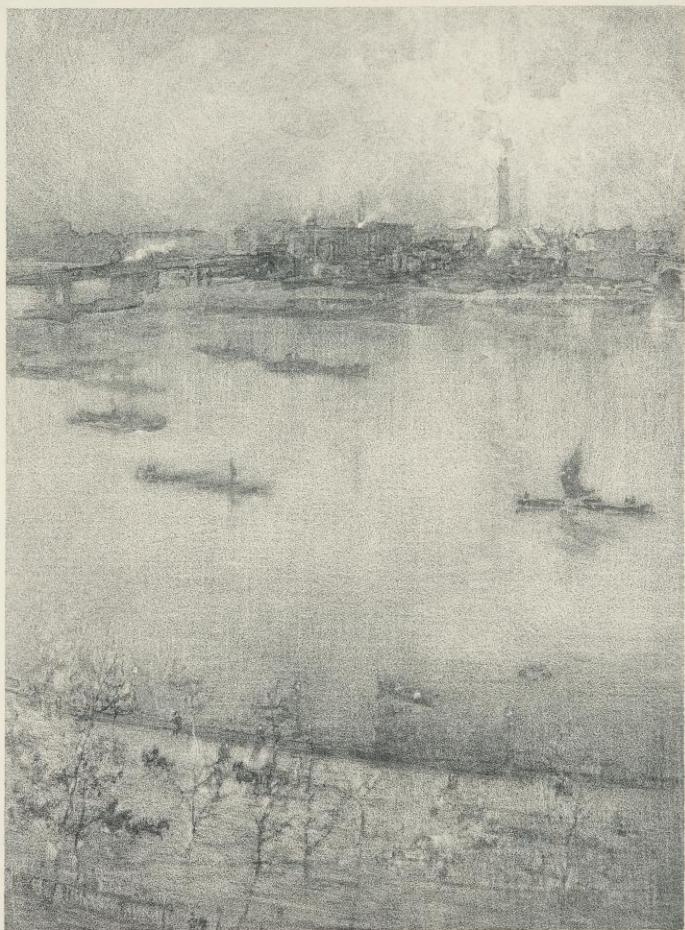


They say that the hills on each side of the stream here once joined and formed a barrier across what is now the Thames, and that then the river ended there above Goring in one vast lake. I am not in a position either to contradict or affirm this statement. I simply offer it.

It is an ancient place, Streatley, dating back, like most river-side towns and villages, to British and Saxon times. Goring is not nearly so pretty a little spot to stop at as Streatley, if you have your choice; but it is passing fair enough in its way, and is nearer the railway in case you want to slip off without paying your hotel bill.



Goring Church & Mill Cottage (circa 1903)



James McNeill Whistler (American, 1834-1903)

*The Thames*, 1896

Lithotint, in black ink, with scraping, on cream Japanese paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XVII

*Washing day.—Fish and fishers.—On the art of angling.—A conscientious fly-fisher.—A fishy story.*

**W**e stayed two days at Streatley, and got our clothes washed. We had tried washing them ourselves, in the river, under George's superintendence, and it had been a failure. Indeed, it had been more than a failure, because we were worse off after we had washed our clothes than we were before. Before we had washed them, they had been very, very dirty, it is true; but they were just wearable. *After* we had washed them—well, the river between Reading and Henley was much cleaner, after we had washed our clothes in it, than it was before. All the dirt contained in the river between Reading and Henley, we collected, during that wash, and worked it into our clothes.

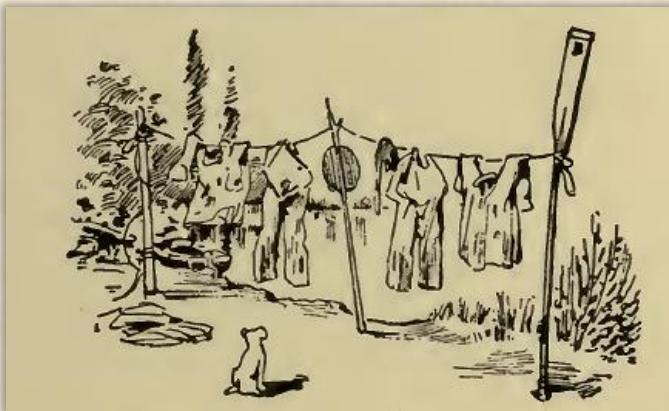
The washerwoman at Streatley said she felt she owed it to herself to charge us just three times the usual prices for that wash. She said it had not been like washing, it had been more in the nature of excavating.

We paid the bill without a murmur.



The neighbourhood of Streatley and Goring is a great fishing centre. There is some excellent fishing to be had here. The river abounds in pike, roach, dace, gudgeon [all four listed fish are fresh- or brackish-water [slightly salty] fish...in terms of their environment, not how they taste cooked], and eels [slippery fresh- and salt-water fish], just here; and you can sit and fish for them all day.

Some people do. They never catch them. I never knew anybody catch anything, up the Thames, except minnows and dead cats, but that has nothing to do, of course, with fishing! The local fisherman's guide doesn't say a word about catching anything. All it says is the place is "a good station for fishing;" and, from what I have seen of the district, I am quite prepared to bear out this statement.



There is no spot in the world where you can get more fishing, or where you can fish for a longer period. Some fishermen come here and fish for a day, and others stop and fish for a month. You can hang on and fish for a year, if you want to: it will be all the same.

The *Angler's Guide to the Thames* says that "jack and perch are also to be had about here," but there the *Angler's Guide* is wrong. Jack and perch may be about there. Indeed, I know for a fact that they are. You can see them there in shoals [great multitudes of fish swimming together; schools], when you are out for a walk along the banks: they come and stand half out of the water with their mouths open for biscuits [biscuit in England is akin to cookie in the United States, but I don't believe Jerome would recommend throwing cookies at a fish...that's just rude; from Chamber's English Dictionary (1889), a biscuit is hard dry bread in cakes [loaves]]; I assume Jerome means to throw pieces of

bread at the fish]. And, if you go for a bathe, they crowd round, and get in your way, and irritate you. But they are not to be "had" by a bit of worm on the end of a hook, nor anything like it—not they!

I am not a good fisherman myself. I devoted a considerable amount of attention to the subject at one time, and was getting on, as I thought, fairly well; but the old hands told me that I should never be any real good at it, and advised me to give it up. They said that I was an extremely neat thrower, and that I seemed to have plenty of gumption[common sense] for the thing, and quite enough constitutional laziness. But they were sure I should never make anything of a fisherman. I had not got sufficient imagination.

They said that as a poet, or a shilling shocker, or a reporter, or anything of that kind, I might be satisfactory, but that, to gain any position as a Thames angler, would require more play of fancy, more power of invention than I appeared to possess.

Some people are under the impression that all that is required to make a good fisherman is the ability to tell lies easily and without blushing; but this is a mistake. Mere bald fabrication[lie] is useless; the veriest[very → verier → veriest] tyro[true beginner] can manage that. It is in the circumstantial[incidental] detail, the embellishing touches of probability, the general air of scrupulous[exacting]—almost of pedantic[overly exacting]—veracity[truth], that the experienced angler is seen.

Anybody can come in and say, "Oh, I caught fifteen dozen perch yesterday evening;" or "Last Monday I landed a gudgeon, weighing eighteen pounds, and measuring three feet from the tip to the tail."

There is no art, no skill, required for that sort of thing. It shows pluck[bravery], but that is all.

No; your accomplished angler would scorn to tell a lie, that way. His method is a study in itself.

He comes in quietly with his hat on, appropriates[takes as one's own] the most comfortable chair, lights his pipe, and commences to puff in silence. He lets the youngsters brag away for a while, and then, during a momentary lull, he removes the pipe from his mouth, and remarks, as he knocks the ashes out against the bars:

"Well, I had a haul on Tuesday evening that it's not much good my telling anybody about."

"Oh! why's that?" they ask.

"Because I don't expect anybody would believe me if I did," replies the old fellow calmly, and without even a tinge of bitterness in his tone, as he refills his pipe, and requests the landlord[the owner/manager of an inn/pub] to bring him three[probably, three fingers used as a crude measure] of Scotch, cold.

There is a pause after this, nobody feeling sufficiently sure of himself to contradict the old gentleman. So he has to go on by himself without any encouragement.

"No," he continues thoughtfully; "I shouldn't believe it myself if anybody told it to me, but it's a fact, for all that. I had been sitting there all the afternoon and had caught literally nothing—except a few dozen dace and a score of jack; and I was just about giving it up as a bad job when I suddenly felt a rather smart pull at the line. I thought it was another little one, and I went to jerk it up. Hang me, if I could move the rod![intimating that he could, if fact, not move the rod] It took me half-an-hour—half-an-hour, sir!—to land that fish; and every moment I thought the line was going to snap! I reached him at last, and what do you think it was? A sturgeon! a forty pound sturgeon! taken on a line, sir! Yes, you may well look surprised—I'll have another three of Scotch, landlord, please."

And then he goes on to tell of the astonishment of everybody who saw it; and what his wife said, when he got home, and of what Joe Buggles[name for an average man; possibly, a variant of *boggle* meaning confused or bewildered] thought about it.

I asked the landlord of an inn up the river once, if it did not injure him, sometimes, listening to the tales that the fishermen about there told him; and he said:

"Oh, no; not now, sir. It did used to knock me over a bit at first, but, lor[lord] love you! me and the missus[wife] we listens to 'em[them] all day now. It's what you're used to, you know. It's what you're used to."

I knew a young man once, he was a most conscientious fellow, and, when he took to fly-fishing, he determined never to exaggerate his hauls by more than twenty-five per cent.

"When I have caught forty fish," said he, "then I will tell people that I have caught fifty, and so on. But I will not lie any more than that, because it is sinful to lie."

But the twenty-five per cent[an abbreviation for the Latin phrase *per centum* meaning by the hundred; nowadays, we write percent or use the symbol %] plan did not work well at all. He never was able to use it. The greatest number of fish he ever caught in one day was three, and you can't add twenty-five per cent to three—at least, not in fish.

So he increased his percentage to thirty-three-and-a-third; but that, again, was awkward, when he had only caught one or two; so, to simplify matters, he made up his mind to just double the quantity.

He stuck to this arrangement for a couple of months, and then he grew dissatisfied with it. Nobody believed him when he told them that he only doubled, and he, therefore, gained no credit that way whatever, while his moderation[not being extreme] put him at a disadvantage among the other anglers. When he had really caught three small fish, and said he had caught six, it used to make him quite jealous to hear a man, whom he knew for a fact had only caught one, going about telling people he had landed two dozen.

So, eventually, he made one final arrangement with himself, which he has religiously held to ever since, and that was to count each fish that he caught as ten, and to assume ten to begin with. For example, if he did not catch any fish at all, then he said he had caught ten fish—you could never catch less than ten fish by his system; that was the foundation of it. Then, if by any chance he really did catch one fish, he called it twenty, while two fish would count thirty, three forty, and so on.

It is a simple and easily worked plan, and there has been some talk lately of its being made use of by the angling fraternity in general. Indeed, the Committee of the Thames Angler's Association did recommend its adoption about two years ago, but some of the older members opposed it. They said they would consider the idea if the number were doubled, and each fish counted as twenty.

If ever you have an evening to spare, up the river, I should advise you to drop into one of the little village inns, and take a seat in the tap-room. You will be nearly sure to meet one or two old rodmen[anglers; fishermen], sipping their toddy there, and they will tell you enough fishy stories, in half an hour, to give you indigestion for a month.

George and I—I don't know what had become of Harris; he had gone out and had a shave, early in the afternoon, and had then come back and spent full forty minutes in pipeclayeing[whitening by using a

fine, white clay called *pipe clay*] his shoes, we had not seen him since—George and I, therefore, and the dog, left to ourselves, went for a walk to Wallingford on the second evening, and, coming home, we called in[stopped by] at a little river-side inn, for a rest, and other things.

We went into the parlour and sat down. There was an old fellow there, smoking a long clay pipe, and we naturally began chatting.

He told us that it had been a fine day to-day, and we told him that it had been a fine day yesterday, and then we all told each other that we thought it would be a fine day to-morrow; and George said the crops seemed to be coming up nicely.

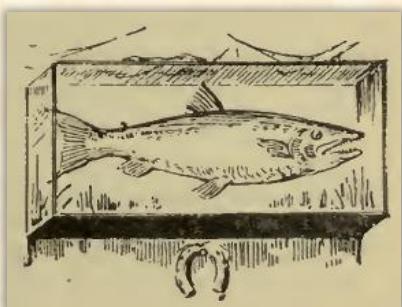
After that it came out, somehow or other, that we were strangers in the neighbourhood, and that we were going away the next morning.

Then a pause ensued in the conversation, during which our eyes wandered round the room. They finally rested upon a dusty old glass-case, fixed very high up above the chimney-piece, and containing a trout. It rather fascinated me, that trout; it was such a monstrous fish. In fact, at first glance, I thought it was a cod.

"Ah!" said the old gentleman, following the direction of my gaze, "fine fellow that, ain't he?"

"Quite uncommon," I murmured; and George asked the old man how much he thought it weighed.

"Eighteen pounds six ounces," said our friend, rising and taking down his coat. "Yes," he continued, "it wur[was] sixteen year ago, come the third o' next month, that I landed him. I caught him just below the bridge with a minnow[a very small fresh-water fish; the young of a larger fish]. They told me he wur in the river, and I said I'd have him, and so I did. You don't see many fish that size about here now, I'm thinking. Good-night, gentlemen, good-night."



And out he went, and left us alone.

We could not take our eyes off the fish after that. It really was a remarkably fine fish. We were still looking at it, when the local carrier[one who conveys goods for others], who had just stopped at the inn, came to the door of the room with a pot of beer in his hand, and he also looked at the fish.

"Good-sized trout, that," said George, turning round to him.

"Ah! you may well say that, sir," replied the man; and then, after a pull at his beer, he added, "Maybe you wasn't here, sir, when that fish was caught?"

"No," we told him. We were strangers in the neighbourhood.

"Ah!" said the carrier, "then, of course, how should you? It was nearly five years ago that I caught that trout."

"Oh! was it you who caught it, then?" said I.

"Yes, sir," replied the genial old fellow. "I caught him just below the lock—leastways[at least], what was the lock then—one Friday afternoon; and the remarkable thing about it is that I caught him with a fly. I'd gone out pike fishing, bless you, never thinking of a trout, and when I saw that whopper on the end of my line, blest if it didn't quite take me aback. Well, you see, he weighed twenty-six pound. Good-night, gentlemen, good-night."

Five minutes afterwards, a third man came in, and described how *he* had caught it early one morning, with bleak[silvery white river-fish, belonging to the carp family]; and then he left, and a stolid[lacking emotion; dull], solemn-looking, middle-aged individual came in, and sat down over by the window.

None of us spoke for a while; but, at length, George turned to the new comer, and said:

"I beg your pardon, I hope you will forgive the liberty that we—perfect strangers in the neighbourhood—are taking, but my friend here and myself would be so much obliged if you would tell us how you caught that trout up there."

"Why, who told you I caught that trout!" was the surprised query.

We said that nobody had told us so, but somehow or other we felt instinctively that it was he who had done it.

"Well, it's a most remarkable thing—most remarkable," answered the stolid stranger, laughing; "because, as a matter of fact, you are

quite right. I did catch it. But fancy your guessing it like that. Dear me, it's really a most remarkable thing."

And then he went on, and told us how it had taken him half an hour to land it, and how it had broken his rod. He said he had weighed it carefully when he reached home, and it had turned the scale at thirty-four pounds.

He went in his turn[when the time came], and when he was gone, the landlord came in to us. We told him the various histories we had heard about his trout, and he was immensely amused, and we all laughed very heartily.

"Fancy Jim Bates and Joe Muggles and Mr. Jones and old Billy Maunders all telling you that they had caught it. Ha! ha! ha! Well, that is good," said the honest old fellow, laughing heartily. "Yes, they are the sort to give it *me*, to put up in *my* parlour, if *they* had caught it, they are! Ha! ha! ha!"

And then he told us the real history of the fish. It seemed that he had caught it himself, years ago, when he was quite a lad; not by any art or skill, but by that unaccountable luck that appears to always wait upon a boy when he plays the wag[avoids or leaves early] from school, and goes out fishing on a sunny afternoon, with a bit of string tied on to the end of a tree.

He said that bringing home that trout had saved him from a whacking, and that even his schoolmaster had said it was worth the rule-of-three[an algebraic short hand for solving for an unknown denominator,  $x$ , given two proportions:  $\frac{a}{b} = \frac{c}{x} \Rightarrow x = \frac{bc}{a}$ ] and practice put together.

He was called out of the room at this point, and George and I again turned our gaze upon the fish.

It really was a most astonishing trout. The more we looked at it, the more we marvelled[marveled] at it.

It excited George so much that he climbed up on the back of a chair to get a better view of it.

And then the chair slipped, and George clutched wildly at the trout-case to save himself, and down it came with a crash, George and the chair on top of it.

"You haven't injured the fish, have you?" I cried in alarm, rushing up.

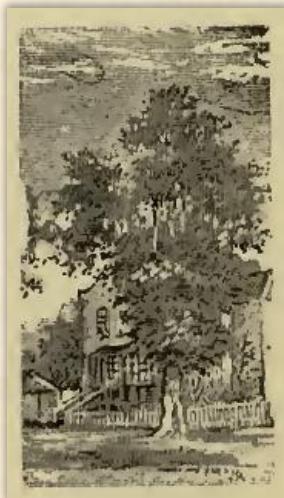
"I hope not," said George, rising cautiously and looking about.

But he had. That trout lay shattered into a thousand fragments—I say a thousand, but they may have only been nine hundred. I did not count them.

We thought it strange and unaccountable that a stuffed trout should break up into little pieces like that.

And so it would have been strange and unaccountable, if it had been a stuffed trout, but it was not.

That trout was plaster of Paris[a white powder that solidifies when water is added].





Wenceslaus Hollar (Bohemian, 1607-1677)

*London Viewed from the Thames River at Milford Stairs Below Arundel House, 1643/1644*

Etching on ivory laid paper

The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XVIII

*Locks.—George and I are photographed.—Wallingford.—Dorchester.—Abingdon.—A family man.—A good spot for drowning.—A difficult bit of water.—Demoralizing effect of river air.*



e left Streatley early the next morning, and pulled up to Culham, and slept under the canvas, in the backwater there.

The river is not extraordinarily interesting between Streatley and Wallingford. From Cleve you get a stretch of six and a half miles without a lock. I believe this is the longest uninterrupted stretch anywhere above Teddington, and the Oxford Club make use of it for their trial eights[also, Trial VIIIs; prior to the annual Oxford vs. Cambridge Boat Race, both universities hold individual Trial VIIIs affording each university's coach the opportunity to see how well the athletes would perform in the full race. For the Trial VIIIs, each coach chooses two teams of eight from their squad, along with two coxes, and these two teams are pitted against each other, Cambridge vs. Cambridge and Oxford vs. Oxford, in the trials. The coaches then decide which team members will appear in the annual Oxford v. Cambridge Boat Race.].





Oxford Men's VIII Celebrating Victory Boat Race (2015)

But however satisfactory this absence of locks may be to rowing-men, it is to be regretted by the mere pleasure-seeker.

For myself, I am fond of locks. They pleasantly break the monotony of the pull. I like sitting in the boat and slowly rising out of the cool depths up into new reaches and fresh views; or sinking down, as it were, out of the world, and then waiting, while the gloomy gates creak, and the narrow strip of daylight between them widens till the fair smiling river lies full before you, and you push your little boat out from its brief prison on to the welcoming waters once again.



They are picturesque little spots, these locks. The stout old lock-keeper, or his cheerful-looking wife, or bright-eyed daughter, are pleasant folk to have a passing chat with.\* You meet other boats there, and river gossip is exchanged. The Thames would not be the fairyland it is without its flower-decked locks.

Talking of locks reminds me of an accident George and I very nearly had one summer's morning at Hampton Court.

It was a glorious day, and the lock was crowded; and, as is a common practice up the river, a speculative[usually, theoretical; in this context, amateur may be a better fit] photographer was taking a picture of us all as we lay upon the rising waters.

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\* Or rather *were*. The Conservancy of late seems to have constituted itself into a society for the employment of idiots. A good many of the new lock-keepers, especially in the more crowded portions of the river, are excitable, nervous old men, quite unfitted for their post.

I did not catch what was going on at first, and was, therefore, extremely surprised at noticing George hurriedly smooth out his trousers, ruffle up his hair, and stick his cap on in a rakish[disregarding convention] manner at the back of his head, and then, assuming an expression of mingled affability[friendliness] and sadness, sit down in a graceful attitude, and try to hide his feet.

My first idea was that he had suddenly caught sight of some girl he knew, and I looked about to see who it was. Everybody in the lock seemed to have been suddenly struck wooden[standing still]. They were all standing or sitting about in the most quaint and curious attitudes I have ever seen off a Japanese fan. All the girls were smiling. Oh, they did look so sweet! And all the fellows were frowning, and looking stern and noble.

And then, at last, the truth flashed across me, and I wondered if I should be in time. Ours was the first boat, and it would be unkind of me to spoil the man's picture, I thought.

So I faced round quickly, and took up a position in the prow, where I leant with careless grace upon the hitcher, in an attitude suggestive of agility and strength. I arranged my hair with a curl over the forehead, and threw an air of tender wistfulness[thoughtfulness] into my expression, mingled with a touch of cynicism, which I am told suits me.

As we stood, waiting for the eventful moment, I heard someone behind call out:

"Hi! look at your nose."

I could not turn round to see what was the matter, and whose nose it was that was to be looked at. I stole a side glance at George's nose! It was all right—at all events, there was nothing wrong with it that could be altered. I squinted down at my own, and that seemed all that could be expected also.

"Look at your nose, you stupid ass!" came the same voice again, louder.

And then another voice cried:

"Push your nose out, can't you, you—you two with the dog!"

Neither George nor I dared to turn round. The man's hand was on the cap[cameras of this period usually had a cover, or cap, over the lens, which was removed allowing light to pass through the lens onto a photographic plate at the back of the camera, sometimes requiring several

minutes to pass before the lens cap could be replaced; it's interesting to note that George Eastman introduced the handheld Kodak camera in 1888 [preloaded with enough film for 100 photographs], and the picture might be taken any moment. Was it us they were calling to? What was the matter with our noses? Why were they to be pushed out!

But now the whole lock started yelling, and a stentorian[very loud; powerful] voice from the back shouted:

"Look at your boat, sir; you in the red and black caps. It's your two corpses that will get taken in that photo, if you ain't quick."

We looked then, and saw that the nose of our boat had got fixed under the woodwork of the lock, while the in-coming water was rising all around it, and tilting it up. In another moment we should be over. Quick as thought, we each seized an oar, and a vigorous blow against the side of the lock with the butt-ends released the boat, and sent us sprawling on our backs.

We did not come out well in that photograph, George and I. Of course, as was to be expected, our luck ordained[decreed; predestined] it, that the man should set his wretched machine in motion at the precise moment that we were both lying on our backs with a wild expression of "Where am I? and what is it?" on our faces, and our four feet waving madly in the air.

Our feet were undoubtedly the leading article in that photograph. Indeed, very little else was to be seen. They filled up the foreground entirely. Behind them, you caught glimpses of the other boats, and bits of the surrounding scenery; but everything and everybody else in the lock looked so utterly insignificant and paltry[worthless] compared with our feet, that all the other people felt quite ashamed of themselves, and refused to subscribe[promise a certain sum of money] to the picture.

The owner of one steam launch, who had bespoke[past tense of bespeak; asked for] six copies, rescinded[cancelled] the order on seeing the negative[a photographic plate was processed to produce a *negative* which was then used to produce a *positive* print on durable photographic paper; enjoying your smartphone camera now, kids? ☺]. He said he would take



them if anybody could show him his launch, but nobody could. It was somewhere behind George's right foot.

There was a good deal of unpleasantness over the business. The photographer thought we ought to take a dozen copies each, seeing that the photo was about nine-tenths us, but we declined. We said we had no objection to being photo'd[photographed] full-length, but we preferred being taken the right way up.

Wallingford, six miles above Streatley, is a very ancient town, and has been an active centre for the making of English history. It was a rude[uncultivated; rough], mud-built town in the time of the Britons, who squatted[occupied land without permission] there, until the Roman legions evicted[expelled] them; and replaced their clay-baked walls by mighty fortifications[walls constructed to resist the attacks of superior forces], the trace of which Time has not yet succeeded in sweeping away, so well those old-world masons[builders specializing in stone] knew how to build.

But Time, though he halted at Roman walls, soon crumbled Romans to dust; and on the ground, in later years, fought savage Saxons and huge Danes, until the Normans came.

It was a walled and fortified town up to the time of the



Thomas Fairfax

Parliamentary War[First English Civil War (1642-1646); there was a quick Second English Civil War (1648) and a Third English Civil War (1650-1651); afterwards, they were civil], when it suffered a long and bitter siege from Fairfax [Thomas Fairfax, 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Fairfax of Cameron, English politician, general and Parliamentary commander-in-chief during the three English Civil Wars]. It fell at last, and then the walls were razed [leveled to the ground].



From Wallingford up to Dorchester the neighbourhood of the river grows more hilly, varied, and picturesque.



Dorchester stands half a mile from the river. It can be reached by paddling up the Thames, if you have a small boat; but the best way is to leave the river at Day's Lock, and take a walk across the fields. Dorchester is a delightfully peaceful old place, nestling in stillness and silence and drowsiness.

Dorchester, like Wallingford, was a city in ancient British times; it was then called Caer Doren, "the city on the water." In more recent times the Romans formed a great camp here, the fortifications surrounding which now seem like low, even hills.



**Dorchester Backwater**

In Saxon days it was the capital of Wessex. It is very old, and it was very strong and great once. Now it sits aside from the stirring world, and nods and dreams.

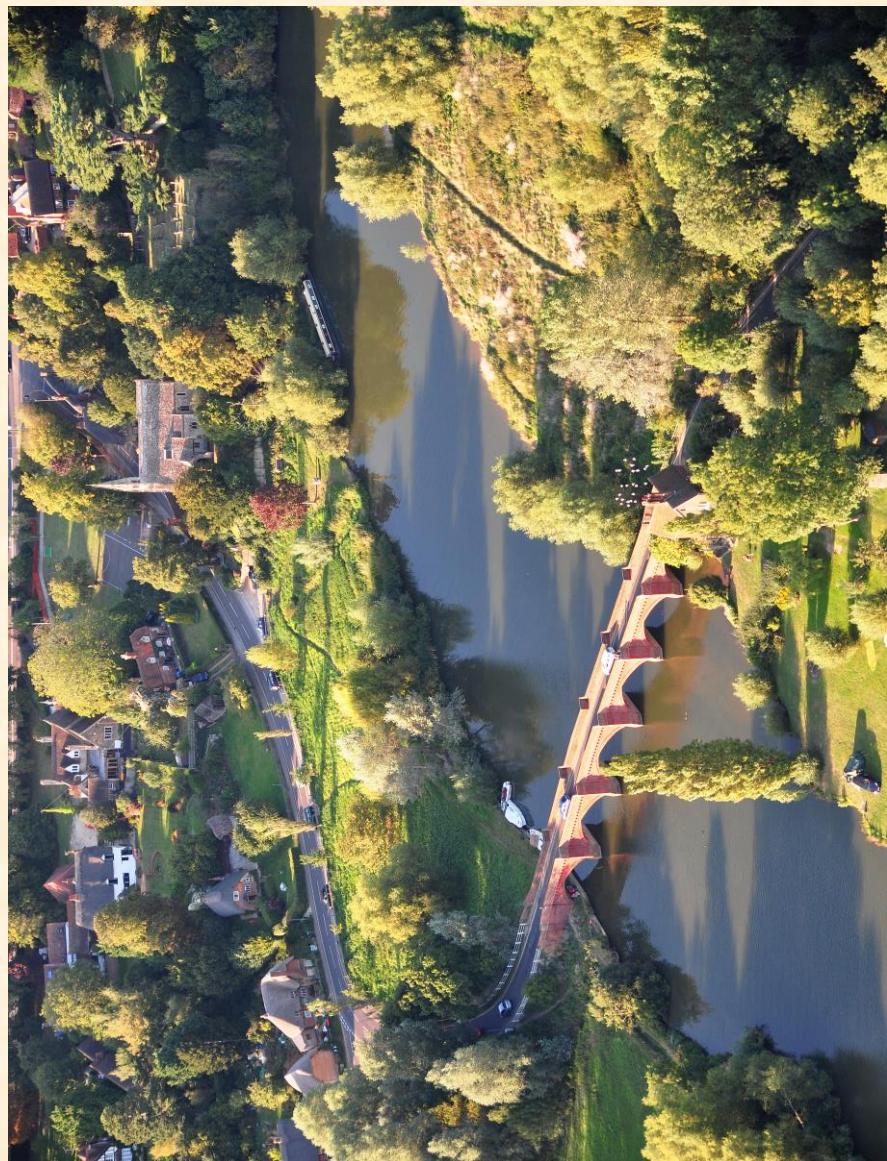


**The George Hotel, Dorchester-on-Thames**

Round Clifton Hampden, itself a wonderfully pretty village, old-fashioned, peaceful, and dainty with flowers, the river scenery is rich and beautiful. If you stay the night on land at Clifton, you cannot do better than put up at the "Barley Mow."<sup>[pub]</sup> It is, without exception, I should say, the quaintest, most old-world inn up the river. It stands on the right of the bridge, quite away from the village. Its low-pitched gables and thatched<sup>[covered with straw]</sup> roof and latticed windows give it quite a storybook appearance, while inside it is even still more once-upon-a-timeyfied.

It would not be a good place for the heroine of a modern novel to stay at. The heroine of a modern novel is always "divinely tall," and she is ever "drawing herself up to her full height." At the "Barley Mow" she would bump her head against the ceiling each time she did this.

It would also be a bad house for a drunken man to put up at. There are too many surprises in the way of unexpected steps down into this room and up into that; and as for getting upstairs to his bedroom, or ever finding his bed when he got up, either operation would be an utter impossibility to him.



Aerial view of Clifton Hampden by Dave Price





We were up early the next morning, as we wanted to be in Oxford by the afternoon. It is surprising how early one *can* get up, when camping out. One does not yearn for "just another five minutes" nearly so much, lying wrapped up in a rug on the boards of a boat, with a Gladstone bag for a pillow, as one does in a featherbed. We had finished breakfast, and were through Clifton Lock by half-past eight.

From Clifton to Culham the river banks are flat, monotonous,



and uninteresting, but, after you get through Culham Lock—the coldest and deepest lock on the river—the landscape improves.

At Abingdon, the river passes by the streets. Abingdon is a typical country town of the smaller order—quiet, eminently respectable, clean, and desperately dull. It prides itself on being old, but whether it can compare in this respect with Wallingford and Dorchester seems doubtful. A famous abbey stood here once, and within what is left of its sanctified [sacred; holy] walls they brew bitter ale nowadays.

In St. Nicholas Church, at Abingdon, there is a monument to John Blackwall and his wife Jane, who both, after leading a happy married life, died on the very same day, August 21, 1625; and in St. Helen's Church, it is recorded that W. Lee [William Lee (1545-1637)], who died in 1637, "had in his lifetime issue from his loins two hundred lacking but three." If you work this out you will find that Mr. W. Lee's family numbered one hundred and ninety-seven. Mr. W. Lee—five times Mayor of Abingdon—was, no doubt, a benefactor to his generation, but I hope there are not many of his kind about in this overcrowded nineteenth century.



From Abingdon to Nuneham Courtenay is a lovely stretch. Nuneham Park is well worth a visit. It can be viewed on Tuesdays

and Thursdays. The house contains a fine collection of pictures and curiosities, and the grounds are very beautiful.



The pool under Sandford lasher[the name given to the weir], just behind the lock, is a very good place to drown yourself in. The undercurrent is terribly strong, and if you once get down into it you are all right. An obelisk marks the spot where two men have already been drowned, while bathing there; and the steps of the obelisk are generally used as a diving-board by young men now who

wish to see if the place really *is* dangerous.

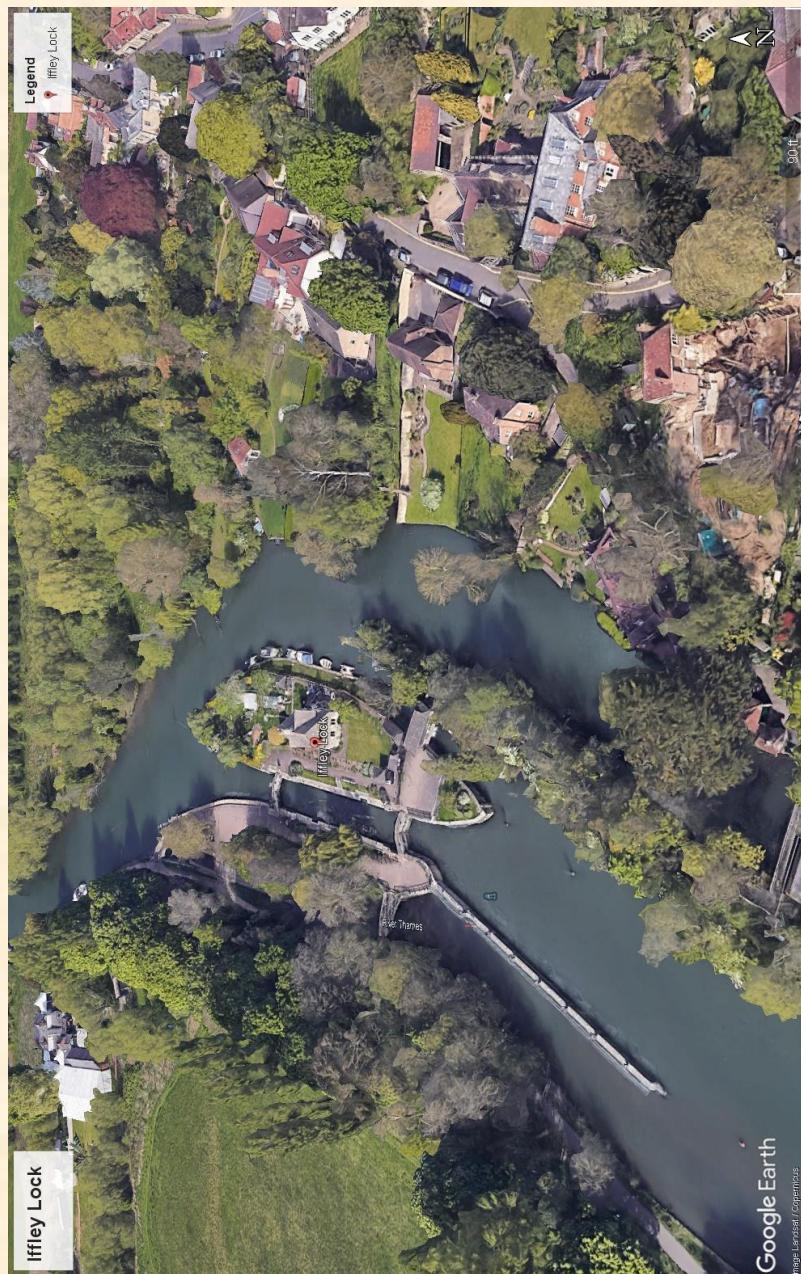
Iffley Lock and Mill, a mile before you reach Oxford, is a favourite subject with the river-loving brethren of the brush[artists; the singular form is *brother of the brush*]. The real article, however, is rather disappointing, after the pictures. Few things, I have noticed, come quite up to the pictures of them, in this world.

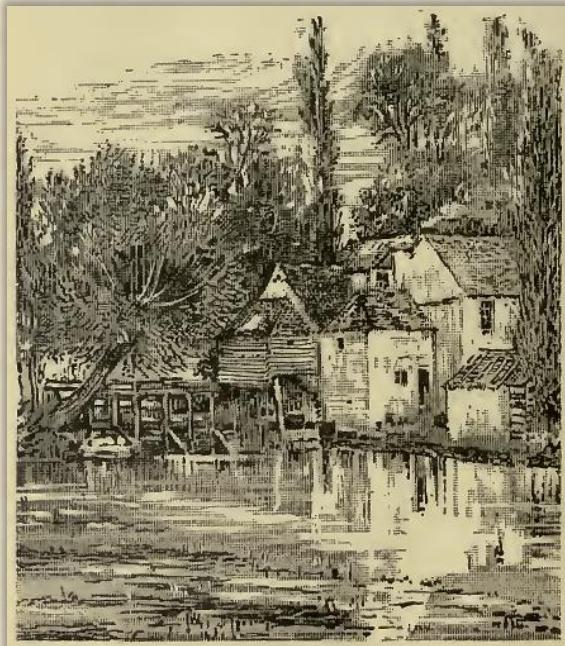
We passed through Iffley Lock at about half-past twelve, and then, having tidied up the boat and made all ready for landing, we set to work on our last mile.



Between Iffley and Oxford is the most difficult bit of the river I know. You want to be born on that bit of water, to understand it. I have been over it a fairish number of times, but I have never been able to get the hang of it. The man who could row a straight course from Oxford to Iffley ought to be able to live comfortably, under one roof, with his wife, his mother-in-law, his elder sister, and the old servant who was in the family when he was a baby.

First the current drives you on to the right bank, and then on to the left, then it takes you out into the middle, turns you round three times, and carries you up stream again, and always ends by trying to smash you up against a college barge[some colleges kept barges moored on the side of the river for social functions, etc.].





Of course, as a consequence of this, we got in the way of a good many other boats, during the mile, and they in ours, and, of course, as a consequence of that, a good deal of bad language occurred.

I don't know why it should be, but everybody is always so exceptionally irritable on the river. Little mishaps, that you would hardly notice on dry land, drive you nearly frantic with rage, when they occur on the water. When Harris or George makes an ass of himself on dry land, I smile indulgently; when they behave in a chucklehead way on the river, I use the most bloodcurdling language to them. When another boat gets in my way, I feel I want to take an oar and kill all the people in it.

The mildest tempered people, when on land, become violent and bloodthirsty when in a boat. I did a little boating once with a young lady. She was naturally of the sweetest and gentlest disposition [temperament] imaginable, but on the river it was quite awful to hear her.

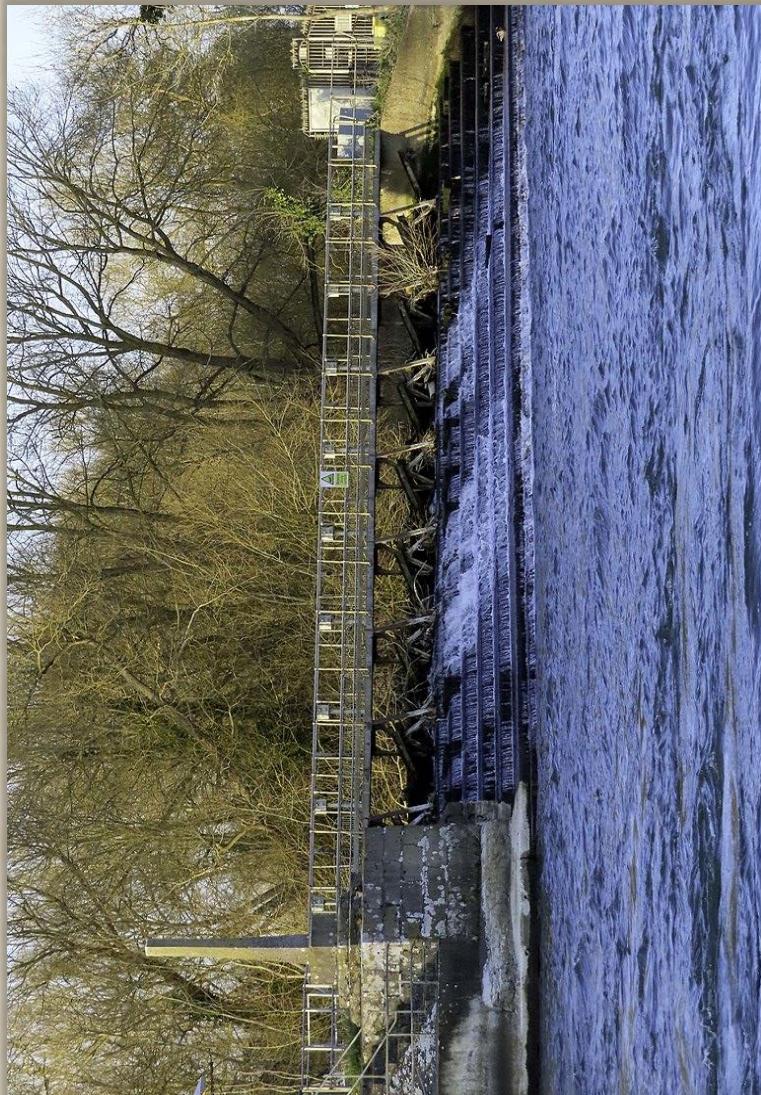


"Oh, drat the man!" she would exclaim, when some unfortunate sculler would get in her way; "why don't he look where he's going?"

And, "Oh, bother the silly old thing!" she would say indignantly, when the sail would not go up properly. And she would catch hold of it, and shake it quite brutally.

Yet, as I have said, when on shore she was kind-hearted and amiable enough.

The air of the river has a demoralising[depriving of moral qualities] effect upon one's temper, and this it is, I suppose, which causes even barge men to be sometimes rude to one another, and to use language which, no doubt, in their calmer moments they regret.



The Weir at Sandford Lasher by Steve Daniels ("An obelisk marks the spot where two men have already been drowned, while bathing there...")



James Barry (Irish, 1741-1806)

*The Thames, or The Triumph of Navigation*, 1791 (published 1792)

Etching with engraving on cream laid paper

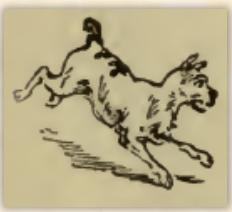
The Art Institute of Chicago

## CHAPTER XIX

*Oxford.—Montmorency's idea of Heaven.—The hired up-river boat, its beauties and advantages.—The "Pride of the Thames."—The weather changes.—The river under different aspects.—Not a cheerful evening.—Yearnings for the unattainable.—The cheery chat goes round.—George performs upon the banjo.—A mournful melody.—Another wet day.—Flight.—A little supper and a toast.*

**W**e spent two very pleasant days at Oxford. There are plenty of dogs in the town of Oxford. Montmorency had eleven fights on the first day, and fourteen on the second, and evidently thought he had got to heaven.

Among folk too constitutionally[relating to the condition of one's



body or mind] weak, or too constitutionally lazy, whichever it may be, to relish up-stream work, it is a common practice to get a boat at Oxford, and row down. For the energetic, however, the up-stream journey is certainly to be preferred. It does not

seem good to be always going with the current. There is more satisfaction in squaring one's back[probably similar to squaring one's shoulders meaning preparing to face adversity], and fighting against it, and winning one's way forward in spite of it—at least, so I feel, when Harris and George are sculling and I am steering.



To those who do contemplate making Oxford their starting-place,



I would say, take your own boat—unless, of course, you can take someone else's without any possible danger of being found out. The boats that, as a rule, are let for hire on the Thames above Marlow, are very good boats. They are fairly water-tight; and so long as they are handled with care, they rarely come to

pieces, or sink. There are places in them to sit down on, and they are complete with all the necessary arrangements—or nearly all—to enable you to row them and steer them.

But they are not ornamental[nice to look at; decorative]. The boat you hire up the river above Marlow is not the sort of boat in which you can flash about and give yourself airs. The hired up-river boat very soon puts a stop to any nonsense of that sort on the part of its occupants. That is its chief—one may say, its only recommendation.

The man in the hired up-river boat is modest and retiring[reserved; modest]. He likes to keep on the shady side, underneath the trees, and to do most of his travelling early in the morning or late at night, when there are not many people about on the river to look at him.

When the man in the hired up-river boat sees anyone he knows, he gets out on to the bank, and hides behind a tree.



I was one of a party who hired an up-river boat one summer, for a few days' trip. We had none of us ever seen the hired up-river boat before; and we did not know what it was when we did see it.

We had written for a boat—a double sculling skiff; and when we went down with our bags to the yard, and gave our names, the man said:

"Oh, yes; you're the party that wrote for a double sculling skiff. It's all right. Jim, fetch round[bring here] *The Pride of the Thames*."

The boy went, and reappeared five



minutes afterwards, struggling with an antediluvian[the period of time in the Bible before Noah and the Flood; more commonly, antiquated] chunk of wood, that looked as though it had been recently dug out of somewhere, and dug out carelessly, so as to have been unnecessarily damaged in the process.

My own idea, on first catching sight of the object, was that it was a Roman relic of some sort,—relic of *what* I do not know, possibly of a coffin.

The neighbourhood of the upper Thames is rich in Roman relics, and my surmise[conjecture; suspicion] seemed to me a very probable one; but our serious young man, who is a bit of a geologist, pooh-poohed[rejected] my Roman relic theory, and said it was clear to the meanest intellect[occasionally, meanest intelligence; unintelligent] (in which category he seemed to be grieved that he could not conscientiously include mine) that the thing the boy had found was the fossil of a whale; and he pointed out to us various evidences proving that it must have belonged to the preglacial[prior to the glacial or drift period; before the Ice Age] period.

To settle the dispute, we appealed to the boy. We told him not to be afraid, but to speak the plain truth: Was it the fossil of a pre-Adamite[before the existence of Adam (of Adam and Eve fame)] whale, or was it an early Roman coffin?

The boy said it was *The Pride of the Thames*.

We thought this a very humorous answer on the part of the boy at first, and somebody gave him twopence as a reward for his ready wit; but when he persisted in keeping up the joke, as we thought, too long, we got vexed[irritated by small provocations] with him.

"Come, come, my lad!" said our captain sharply, "don't let us have any nonsense. You take your mother's washing-tub home again, and bring us a boat."

The boat-builder himself came up then, and assured us, on his word, as a practical man, that the thing really was a boat—was, in fact, *the* boat, the "double sculling skiff" selected to take us on our trip down the river.

We grumbled a good deal. We thought he might, at least, have had it whitewashed or tarred—had *something* done to it to distinguish it from a bit of a wreck; but he could not see any fault in it.

He even seemed offended at our remarks. He said he had picked us out the best boat in all his stock, and he thought we might have been more grateful.

He said it, *The Pride of the Thames*, had been in use, just as it now stood (or rather as it now hung together), for the last forty years, to *his* knowledge, and nobody had complained of it before, and he did not see why we should be the first to begin.

We argued no more.

We fastened the so-called boat together with some pieces of string, got a bit of wall-paper and pasted over the shabbier places, said our prayers, and stepped on board.

They charged us thirty-five shillings for the loan of the remnant for six days; and we could have bought the thing out-and-out for



River Thames in Oxford by Wayland Smith (2013)

four-and-sixpence at any sale of drift-wood round the coast.

The weather changed on the third day,—oh! I am talking about our present trip now,—and we started from Oxford upon our homeward journey in the midst of a steady drizzle.

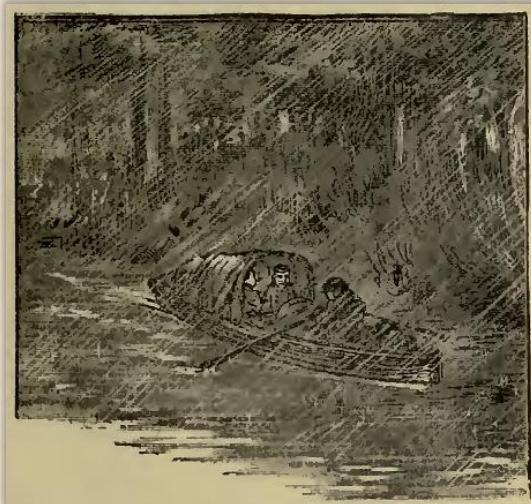
The river—with the sunlight flashing from its dancing wavelets[tiny waves], gilding gold the grey-green beech trunks, glinting through the dark, cool wood paths, chasing shadows o'er[over] the shallows, flinging diamonds from the mill-wheels, throwing kisses to the lilies, wantoning[behaving playfully] with the weirs' white waters,

silvering[coating] moss-grown walls and bridges, brightening every tiny townlet, making sweet each lane and meadow, lying tangled in the rushes, peeping, laughing, from each inlet, gleaming gay on many a far sail, making soft the air with glory—is a golden fairy stream.

But the river—chill and weary, with the ceaseless rain-drops falling on its brown and sluggish waters, with a sound as of a woman, weeping low in some dark chamber; while the woods, all dark and silent, shrouded in their mists of vapour, stand like ghosts upon the margin; silent ghosts with eyes reproachful[expressing shame or disapproval], like the ghosts of evil actions, like the ghosts of friends neglected—is a spirit-haunted water through the land of vain regrets.

Sunlight is the life-blood of Nature. Mother Earth looks at us with such dull, soulless eyes, when the sunlight has died away from out of her. It makes us sad to be with her then; she does not seem to know us or to care for us. She is as a widow who has lost the husband she loved, and her children touch her hand, and look up into her eyes, but gain no smile from her.

We rowed on all that day through the rain, and very melancholy[gloomy; depressing] work it was. We pretended, at first, that we enjoyed it. We said it was a change, and that we liked to see the river under all its different aspects. We said we could not expect to have it all sunshine, nor should we wish it. We told each other that Nature was beautiful, even in her tears.



Indeed, Harris and I were quite enthusiastic about the business, for the first few hours. And we sang a song about a gipsy's[gypsy's] life, and how delightful a gipsy's existence was!—free to storm and sunshine, and to every wind that blew!—and how he enjoyed the rain, and what a lot of good it did him; and how he laughed at people who didn't like it.

George took the fun more soberly, and stuck to the umbrella.

We hoisted the cover before we had lunch, and kept it up all the afternoon, just leaving a little space in the bow, from which one of us could paddle and keep a look-out. In this way we made nine miles, and pulled up for the night a little below Day's Lock.

I cannot honestly say that we had a merry evening. The rain poured down with quiet persistency. Everything in the boat was damp and clammy. Supper was not a success. Cold veal pie, when you don't feel hungry, is apt to cloy[sicken; annoy]. I felt I wanted whitebait[a very small, delicate white fish of the herring kind] and a cutlet; Harris babbled[talked foolishly] of soles and white-sauce, and passed the remains of his pie to Montmorency, who declined it, and, apparently insulted by the offer, went and sat over at the other end of the boat by himself.

George requested that we would not talk about these things, at all events until he had finished his cold boiled beef without mustard.

We played penny nap[a card game] after supper. We played for about an hour and a half, by the end of which time George had won fourpence—George always is lucky at cards—and Harris and I had lost exactly twopence each.

We thought we would give up gambling then. As Harris said, it breeds an unhealthy excitement when carried too far. George offered to go on and give us our revenge; but Harris and I decided not to battle any further against Fate.

After that, we mixed ourselves some toddy, and sat round and talked. George told us about a man he had known, who had come up the river two years ago and who had slept out in a damp boat on just such another night as that was, and it had given him rheumatic fever, and nothing was able to save him, and he had died in great agony ten days afterwards. George said he was quite a young man, and was engaged to be married. He said it was one of the saddest things he had ever known.

And that put Harris in mind of a friend of his, who had been in the Volunteers[the Volunteer Force was a citizen army of part-time rifle, artillery and engineer corps, created as a popular movement throughout the British Empire; established in 1859; disbanded in 1922], and who had slept out under canvas one wet night down at Aldershot, "on just such another night as this," said Harris; and he had woke up in the morning a cripple for life. Harris said he would introduce us both to the man when we got back to town; it would make our hearts bleed to see him.

This naturally led to some pleasant chat about sciatica[generally, hip and back pain], fevers, chills, lung diseases, and bronchitis; and Harris said how very awkward it would be if one of us were taken seriously ill in the night, seeing how far away we were from a doctor.

There seemed to be a desire for something frolicsome[full of mirth] to follow upon this conversation, and in a weak moment I suggested that George should get out his banjo, and see if he could not give us a comic song.

I will say for George that he did not want[in this context, need] any pressing. There was no nonsense about having left his music at home, or anything of that sort. He at once fished out his instrument, and commenced to play "Two Lovely Black Eyes."

I had always regarded "Two Lovely Black Eyes" as rather a commonplace tune until that evening. The rich vein of sadness that George extracted from it quite surprised me.

[

The comic song "Two Lovely Black Eyes" was written in 1886 by the British entertainer Charles Coborn (4 August 1852 – 23 November 1945). The lyrics in full appear below. You can find the original recording sung by Coborn himself on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Nxoesda-QK0>.



Charles Coborn

Strolling so happy down Bethnal Green  
 This gay youth you might have seen  
 Tompkins and I, with his girl between,  
 Oh, what a surprise!  
 I praised the conservatives, frank and free,  
 Tompkins got angry so speedily  
 All in a moment he handed to me  
 Two lovely black eyes.

Two lovely black eyes.  
 Oh, what a surprise!  
 Only for telling a man he was wrong.  
 Two lovely black eyes.

Next time I argued I thought it best  
 To give the conservative side a rest.  
 The merits of Liberals I freely pressed  
 When, oh what a surprise!  
 The chap I had met was a Tory true,  
 Nothing the Liberals right could do.  
 This was my share of that argument, too:  
 Two lovely black eyes.

Two lovely black eyes.  
 Oh, what a surprise!  
 Only for telling a man he was wrong.  
 Two lovely black eyes.

[Spoken:] Now, this song being nothing if not moral...

The moral you've caught I can hardly doubt  
 Never on politics rave and shout.  
 Leave it to others to fight it out,  
 If you would be wise.  
 Better, far better, it is to let  
 Liberals and Tories alone you bet.  
 Unless you're willing and anxious to get  
 Two lovely black e-e-e-e-eyes.

Two lovely black eyes.  
 Oh, what a surprise!  
 Only for telling a man he was wrong.  
 Two lovely black eyes.

The desire that grew upon Harris and myself, as the mournful strains progressed, was to fall upon each other's necks and weep; but by great effort we kept back the rising tears, and listened to the wild yearnful[sorrowful; gloomy] melody in silence.

When the chorus came we even made a desperate effort to be merry. We refilled our glasses and joined in; Harris, in a voice trembling with emotion, leading, and George and I following a few words behind:

"Two lovely black eyes;  
Oh! what a surprise!  
Only for telling a man he was wrong,  
Two—"

There we broke down. The unutterable pathos[suffering] of George's accompaniment to that "two" we were, in our then state of depression, unable to bear. Harris sobbed like a little child, and the dog howled till I thought his heart or his jaw must surely break.

George wanted to go on with another verse. He thought that when he had got a little more into the tune, and could throw more "abandon," as it were, into the rendering, it might not seem so sad. The feeling of the majority, however, was opposed to the experiment.

There being nothing else to do, we went to bed—that is, we undressed ourselves, and tossed about at the bottom of the boat for some three or four hours. After which, we managed to get some fitful slumber until five A.M., when we all got up and had breakfast.

The second day was exactly like the first. The rain continued to pour down, and we sat, wrapped up in our mackintoshes, underneath the canvas, and drifted slowly down.

One of us—I forgot which one now, but I rather think it was myself—made a few feeble attempts during the course of the morning to work up the old gipsy foolishness about being children of Nature and enjoying the wet; but it did not go down well at all. That—

"I care not for the rain, not I!"

was so painfully evident, as expressing the sentiments of each of us, that to sing it seemed unnecessary.

On one point we were all agreed, and that was that, come what might, we would go through with this job to the bitter end. We had come out for a fortnight's enjoyment on the river, and a fortnight's enjoyment on the river we meant to have. If it killed us! well, that would be a sad thing for our friends and relations, but it could not be helped. We felt that to give in to the weather in a climate such as ours would be a most disastrous precedent.

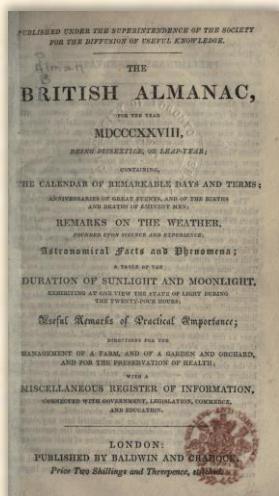
"It's only two days more," said Harris, "and we are young and strong. We may get over it all right, after all."



At about four o'clock we began to discuss our arrangements for the evening. We were a little past Goring then, and we decided to paddle on to Pangbourne, and put up there for the night.

"Another jolly evening!" murmured George.

We sat and mused on the prospect. We should be in at Pangbourne by five. We should finish dinner at, say, half-past six. After that we could walk about the village in the pouring rain until bed-time; or we could sit in a dimly-lit bar-parlour and read the almanac [The British Almanac of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, published yearly from 1828 until 1914, contained a 'calendar of remarkable days and terms', 'anniversaries of great events, and of the births and deaths of eminent men', 'remarks on the weather', 'astronomical facts and phenomena', 'a table of the duration of sunlight and moonlight', 'useful remarks of practical importance', 'directions for the management of a farm, and of a garden and orchard' and a 'miscellaneous register of information'].



"Why, the Alhambra [A popular theatre and music hall, opened in 1854 and closed in 1936, located on the east side of Leicester Square, in the West End of London, its name taken from the Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain.] would be almost more lively," said Harris, venturing his head outside the cover for a moment and taking a survey of the sky.



Leicester Square with the Alhambra by Frank Watkins (1874)

"With a little supper at the ---\* to follow," I added, half unconsciously.

"Yes it's almost a pity we've made up our minds to stick to this boat," answered Harris; and then there was silence for a while.

"If we *hadn't* made up our minds to contract our certain deaths in this bally old coffin," observed George, casting a glance of intense malevolence [inclination to injure] over the boat, "it might be worth while to mention that there's a train leaves Pangbourne, I know, soon after five, which would just land us in town in comfortable time to get a chop, and then go on to the place you mentioned afterwards."



Nobody spoke. We looked at one another, and each one seemed to see his own mean and guilty thoughts reflected in the faces of the others. In silence, we dragged out and overhauled the Gladstone. We looked up the river and down the river; not a soul was in sight!

---

\* A capital little out-of-the-way restaurant, in the neighbourhood of ---, where you can get one of the best-cooked and cheapest little French dinners or suppers that I know of, with an excellent bottle of Beaune, for three-and-six; and which I am not going to be idiot enough to advertise.

Twenty minutes later, three figures, followed by a shamed-looking dog, might have been seen creeping stealthily from the boat-house at the "Swan" towards the railway station, dressed in the following neither neat nor gaudy costume:

Black leather shoes, dirty; suit of boating flannels, very dirty; brown felt hat, much battered; mackintosh, very wet; umbrella.

We had deceived the boatman at Pangbourne. We had not had the face to tell him that we were running away from the rain. We had left the boat, and all it contained, in his charge, with instructions that it was to be ready for us at nine the next morning. If, we said—*if* anything unforeseen should happen, preventing our return, we would write to him.

We reached Paddington at seven, and drove direct to the restaurant I have before described, where we partook of a light meal, left Montmorency, together with suggestions for a supper to be ready at half-past ten, and then continued our way to Leicester Square [a pedestrianized square in the West End of London, England].

We attracted a good deal of attention at the Alhambra. On our presenting ourselves at the paybox we were gruffly directed to go round to Castle Street, and were informed that we were half-an-hour behind our time.

We convinced the man, with some difficulty, that we were *not* "the world-renowned contortionists from the Himalaya Mountains," and he took our money and let us pass.

Inside we were a still greater success. Our fine bronzed countenances and picturesque clothes were followed round the place with admiring gaze. We were the cynosure [anything that attracts attention] of every eye.

It was a proud moment for us all.

We adjourned soon after the first ballet, and wended [wound; turned; traveled] our way back to the restaurant, where supper was already awaiting us.

I must confess to enjoying that supper. For about ten days we seemed to have been living, more or less, on nothing but cold meat, cake, and bread and jam. It had been a simple, a nutritious diet; but there had been nothing exciting about it, and the odour of Burgundy [French wine], and the smell of French sauces, and the sight

of clean napkins and long loaves, knocked as a very welcome visitor at the door of our inner man.

We pegged[worked steadily, in this context, at eating] and quaffed[drank] away in silence for a while, until the time came when, instead of sitting bolt upright, and grasping the knife and fork firmly, we leant back in our chairs and worked slowly and carelessly—when we stretched out our legs beneath the table, let our napkins fall, unheeded[unnoticed], to the floor, and found time to more critically examine the smoky ceiling than we had hitherto been able to do—when we rested our glasses at arm's-length upon the table, and felt good, and thoughtful, and forgiving.

Then Harris, who was sitting next the window, drew aside the curtain and looked out upon the street.

It glistened darkly in the wet, the dim lamps flickered with each gust, the rain splashed steadily into the puddles and trickled down the waterspouts into the running gutters. A few soaked wayfarers[travelers] hurried past, crouching beneath their dripping umbrellas, the women holding up their skirts.

"Well," said Harris, reaching his hand out for his glass, "we have had a pleasant trip, and my hearty thanks for it to old Father Thames—but I think we did well to chuck it when we did. Here's to Three Men well out of a Boat!"

And Montmorency, standing on his hind legs, before the window, peering out into the night, gave a short bark of decided concurrence[agreement] with the toast.





Neptune, Roman god of freshwater and the sea by Michel André Anguier.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – *Babes in the Woods* by Thomas Millington

The original version of Thomas Millington's poem was published in 1595 sporting the enormous title "The Norfolk gent his will and Testament and howe he Commytted the keepinge of his Children to his own brother whoe delte most wickedly with them and howe God plagued him for it". Many titularly-truncated versions followed over the years, such as "Babes in the Wood" or "Children in the Wood". The New York publisher Mahlon Day's 1828 version is reproduced below.

---

Come ponder well, you parents dear,  
The words that I shall write,  
A doleful story you shall hear,  
Which time hath brought to light.

A gentleman of good account,  
In Norfolk liv'd of late,  
Whoso riches did indeed amount  
unto a fair estate.

He lay with sickness like to die,  
No help could save his life;  
And at that time, as sick as he,  
Lay his afflicted wife.

This pair had liv'd where peace abode;  
Were to each other kind;  
In love they liv'd -- in love they died,  
And left two babes behind.

The one a fine and pretty boy,  
Not passing five years old,  
The next a girl more young than he,  
And made in beauty's mould.

The father left his little son,  
As plainly doth appear,  
When he to perfect age should come,  
Three hundred pounds a year.

And to his little daughter Jane,  
Five hundred pounds in gold,  
To be paid down on marriage day,  
Which might not be controul'd.

But if the children chanc'd to die,  
Ere they to age should come,  
Their uncle should possess their wealth,  
For so the will did run.

'Now brother,' said the dying man,  
'Look to my children dear,  
'Be good unto my boy and girl,  
'No friend else have I here.'

'To God and thee, I recommend,  
'My children, night and clay,  
'But little time we surely have  
'In this low world to stay.'

'You must be father -- mother too,  
'And uncle, all in one;  
'God knows what will become of them  
'When with the world I'm done.'

With that exclaim'd their mother dear,  
'O brother, kind and free!  
'Thou art the man to bring our babes  
'To joy or misery.'

'If thou shouldst keep them carefully,  
'Then God will grant reward;  
'If otherwise, thou then shall feel,  
'The anger of the Lord.'

She kiss'd her children then in love,  
That from her bowels glow'd:  
'God bless you both, my children dear,'  
The tears then freely flow'd.

When they had done, the brother spoke  
To this sick couple there:  
'About your children, young and dear,  
'O do not fear or care.'

'God never prosper me or mine;  
'Let all my riches fade,  
'If I should wrong your children dear,  
'When in the grave you're laid.'

The parents died -- possessed one  
tomb,  
The children home he takes;  
He palliates their grief and pain,  
So much of them he makes.

But soon another scene we see --  
The love of money wound:  
He strays from truth -- humanity,  
To villainy profound.

He had not kept these pretty babes,  
A twelve-month and a day,  
Till for their wealth he found a plan,  
To take their lives away.

He bargained with two ruffians rude,  
By wickedness beguil'd,  
To take these tender children young,  
And slay them in the wild.

He told his wife, and all around,  
He did the children send,  
To be in London fairly train'd,  
With one who was a friend.

Thus went away these pretty babes,  
They seem'd in harmless pride,  
Rejoicing with a merry mind,  
At such a horse-back ride.

They smile and prattle on the road,  
While pleasure bears the sway,  
Chat with the wretches who agreed  
To take their lives away.

So that their pretty speeches made  
Their murderers relent;  
For tho' they undertook the deed,  
They sorely did repent.

Yet one of them more hard of heart,  
Vow'd to perform his charge,  
Because the wretch who hired him,  
Had paid him very large.

The other still oppos'd the thing,  
So here they fell in strife;  
With one another then they fought  
About the children's life.

And he that was of mildest mood,  
The other monster slew;  
The children in the lonely wood,  
Quak'd at the awful view.

He took the children by the hand,  
While tears stood in their eye,  
Told them to go along with him,  
And not to mourn or cry.

Two miles by him they thus were led,  
For food they did complain:  
'Stay here (said he) I'll bring you bread  
When I return again.'

These pretty babes, with hand in hand,  
Went wandering up and down,  
But never more could see the man  
Returning from the town.

With blackberries their pretty lips  
Were all besmear'd and dyed;  
And when they saw the gloomy night,  
Sat down and mourn'd and cried.

How, after this, it far'd with them,  
We scarce can tell our youth,  
For want of good authority,  
To state the same as truth.

"Tis said, the wild they travell'd o'er,  
At length for want of food,  
They pin'd away, in anguish sore,  
And perish'd in the wood.

And now the heavy hand of God,  
Upon their uncle fell;  
Most fearful fiends did haunt his house,  
His conscience felt a hell.

And in a voyage, two sons of his,  
Both perish'd on the sea;  
By loss on loss he was reduc'd  
To doleful misery.

The thunders roar'd, the lightnings  
flash'd,  
One night of gloom most dire;  
It struck his buildings that were round,  
And set them all on fire.

His barns were burnt, his goods  
consum'd  
His lands were barren made  
His cattle died that stock'd the field,  
And nothing with him staid.

He lost or mortgag'd all his land,  
Ere sev'n years came about:  
At length the direful wicked act,  
By Providence came out.

The man who vilely had agreed,  
To kill these children dear,  
For robb'ry was condemn'd to die:  
When to his exit near,

He made confession of the truth,  
As is above express'd:  
And for his wickedness in youth,  
Was horribly distress'd.

Their uncle, while with judgments met  
While bitter anguish sway'd;  
In prison lay confined for debt,  
And there his exit made.

All you that be executors,  
Or hold the guardian's place,  
O'er children who are fatherless,  
The infant's helpless race,

O, take example by this scene --  
Do justly, with delight;  
Lest God in judgment on you fall,  
And your vile deeds requite.

APPENDIX B – *The Flies and the Ants* by Thomas Day

The History of Sandford and Merton by Thomas Day was published in 1783. The book follows the transformation of the spoiled Tommy Merton into a virtuous gentleman with the help of his plain and honest friend, Henry Sandford, a farmer's son. The story entitled *The Flies and the Ants* is reproduced below.

---

In the corner of a farmer's garden, there once happened to be a nest of ants, who, during the fine weather of the summer, were employed all day long in drawing little seeds and grain of corn into their hole. Near them there happened to be a bed of flowers, upon which a great quantity of flies used to be always sporting, and humming, and diverting themselves by flying from one flower to another. A little boy, who was the farmer's son, used frequently to observe the different employments of these animals; and, as he was very young and ignorant, he one day thus expressed himself: "Can any creature be so simple as these ants? All day long they are working and toiling, instead of enjoying the fine weather, and diverting themselves like these flies, who are the happiest creatures in the world." Some time after he had made this observation, the weather grew extremely cold, the sun was scarcely seen to shine, and the nights were chill and frosty. The same little boy, walking then in the garden, did not see a single ant, but all the flies lay scattered up and down, either dead or dying. As he was very good-natured, he could not help pitying the unfortunate insects, and asking, at the same time, what had happened to the ants, that he used to see in the same place? The father said, "The flies are all dead, because they were careless animals, who gave themselves no trouble about laying up provisions, and were too idle to work: but the ants, who had been busy all the summer, in providing for their maintenance during the winter, are all alive and well; and you will see them as soon as the warm weather returns."

"Very well, Harry," said Mr. Barlow, "we will now take a walk." They accordingly rambled out into the fields, where Mr. Barlow made Harry take notice of several kinds of plants, and told him the names and nature of them. At last Harry, who had observed some very pretty purple berries upon a plant that bore a purple flower, and grew

in the hedges, brought them to Mr. Barlow, and asked whether they were good to eat. "It is very lucky," said Mr. Barlow, "young man, that you asked the question before you put them into your mouth; for, had you tasted them, they would have given you violent pains in your head and stomach, and perhaps have killed you, as they grow upon a plant called Nightshade, which is a rank poison." "Sir," said Harry, "I take care never to eat anything without knowing what it is, and I hope, if you will be so good as to continue to teach me, I shall very soon know the names and qualities of all the herbs which grow."

As they were returning home, Harry saw a very large bird called a Kite, upon the ground, who seemed to have something in his claws, which he was tearing to pieces. Harry, who knew him to be one of those ravenous creatures which prey upon others, ran up to him, shouting as loud as he could; and the bird, being frightened, flew away, and left a chicken behind him, very much hurt, indeed, but still alive. "Look, sir," said Harry, "if that cruel creature has not almost killed this poor chicken; see how he bleeds, and hangs his wings! I will put him into my bosom to recover him, and carry him home; and he shall have part of my dinner every day till he is well, and able to shift for himself."

As soon as they came home, the first care of little Harry was to put his wounded chicken into a basket with some fresh straw, some water, and some bread. After that Mr. Barlow and he went to dinner.

In the meantime, Tommy, who had been skulking about all day, very much mortified and uneasy, came in, and, being very hungry, was going to sit down to the table with the rest; but Mr. Barlow stopped him, and said, "No, sir, as you are too much of a gentleman to work, we, who are not so, do not choose to work for the idle." Upon this Tommy retired into a corner, crying as if his heart would break, but more from grief than passion, as he began to perceive that nobody minded his ill-temper.

But little Harry, who could not bear to see his friend so unhappy, looked up half-crying into Mr. Barlow's face, and said, "Pray, sir, may I do as I please with my share of the dinner?" "Yes, to be sure, child." "Why, then," said he, getting up, "I will give it all to poor Tommy, who wants it more than I do." Saying this, he gave it to him as he sat in the corner; and Tommy took it, and thanked him without ever turning his eyes from off the ground. "I see," said Mr. Barlow,

"that though gentlemen are above being of any use themselves, they are not above taking the bread that other people have been working hard for." At this Tommy cried still more bitterly than before.

The next day, Mr. Barlow and Harry went to work as before; but they had scarcely begun before Tommy came to them, and desired that he might have a hoe too, which Mr. Barlow gave him; but, as he had never before learned to handle one, he was very awkward in the use of it, and hit himself several strokes upon his legs. Mr. Barlow then laid down his own spade, and showed him how to hold and use it, by which means, in a short time, he became very expert, and worked with the greatest pleasure. When their work was over they retired all three to the summer-house; and Tommy felt the greatest joy imaginable when the fruit was produced, and he was invited to take his share, which seemed to him the most delicious he had ever tasted, because working in the air had given him an appetite.

As soon as they had done eating Mr. Barlow took up a book, and asked Tommy whether he would read them a story out of it? but he, looking a little ashamed, said he had never learned to read. "I am very sorry for it," said Mr. Barlow, "because you lose a very great pleasure: then Harry shall read to you." Harry accordingly took up the book, and read the following story...

## APPENDIX C – Tombleson's Panoramic Map of the Thames (1840)



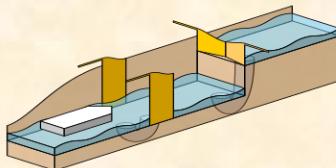




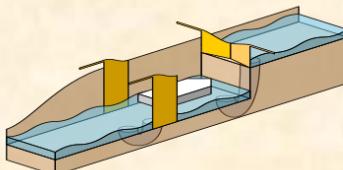


## APPENDIX D – How a River/Canal Lock Works

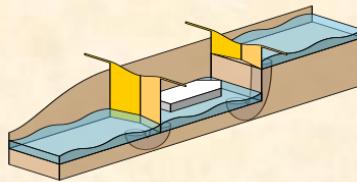
Boat travels through open lock doors into the center part of the lock. (Note that not all boats have the top half shaved off...this is just an illustration.)



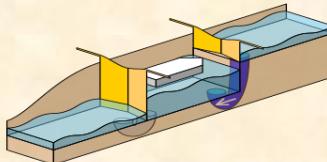
Boat stops prior to hitting the upper lock doors so as not to upset the lock master.



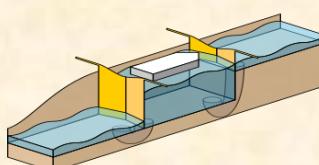
Lower lock doors are sealed preventing the boat from escaping causing much anxiety among the 19<sup>th</sup> century passengers.



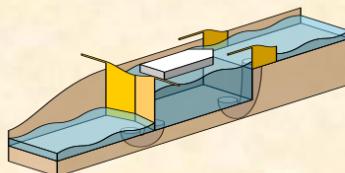
Water from the upper part of the lock is quickly tinged purple and funneled into the center part of the lock causing the water and boat to rise.



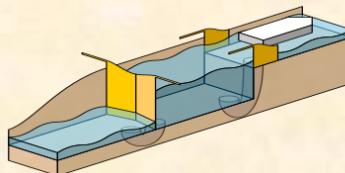
Once the boat reaches the correct height, or the lock master starts to cry, the water ceases being funneled into the center part of the lock.



The upper lock doors are swung open signaling impending freedom to all onboard.



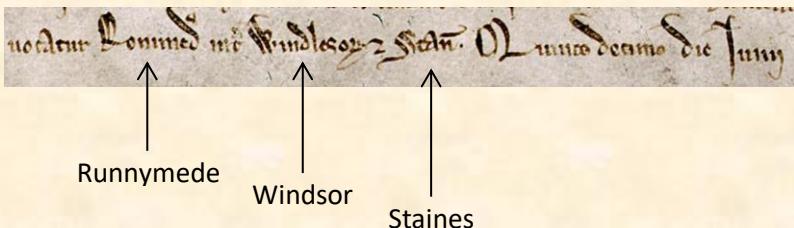
Boat travels out of the lock in search of its top half. (No boat was harmed during the creation of this illustration.)



## APPENDIX E – Runningmede or Runnymede?

In Chapter XII, Jerome indicates the other place where the Magna Carta was possibly signed, rather than Magna Charta Island, is Runningmede. But, Jerome puts that word in double-quotes, which is mysterious. In several other sources, I've see Runningmede, Runnymede, Runnimede and so on. So, which is it?

If you take a look near the end of the Magna Carta itself, you'll see the following text in Latin (English translation for the fragment: *in the plain called Runnymede between Windsor and Staines, on the fifteenth day of June*):



You'll immediately note that the Latin word *Ronimed* is printed in the Magna Carta and not Runningmede, Runnymede, etc. (Getting directions back then must have been a nightmare!) According to the Thames-related website [thames.me.uk](http://thames.me.uk):

The name Runnymede is Anglo-Saxon, and doesn't mean, as we might imagine, 'runny', i.e. a 'wet' meadow but derives from the word 'runieg' meaning meeting place. Since as far back as at least the ninth century, the meadow at Runnymede had been somewhere where kings gathered to consult their vassals, and where enemies could meet to negotiate in safety.

Wikipedia has a similar explanation:

The name Runnymede may be derived from the Anglo-Saxon *runieg* (regular meeting) and *mede* (mead or meadow), describing a place in the meadows used to hold regular

meetings. The Witan, Witenagemot or Council of the Anglo-Saxon Kings of the 7th to 11th centuries was held from time to time at Runnymede during the reign of Alfred the Great. The Council met usually in the open air. This political organ was transformed in succeeding years, influencing the creation of England's 13th century parliament.

According to the book *Annals of Windsor* by Robert R. Tighe and James E. Davis (1858), Volume 1, p. 51:

The Charter bears date in the field called "Runimedē," between Staines and Windsor, on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of June, in the seventeenth year of the king's reign. Runimedē is situated between Old Windsor and Staines, within the limits of Surrey. The road from Windsor to Staines passes over it. It is still a fine level open meadow on the banks of the Thames, and within sight of the towers of Windsor Castle. Egham races are now annually held on the adjoining land. The cause of the selection of this particular spot for the meeting does not exactly appear, but may be inferred. The name "Runimedē," which the field then bore and still retains (although sometimes varied in the spelling), is evidently derived from *Rún* and *mede*, signifying in Anglo-Saxon the Council Meadow.

Referring to Joseph Bosworth's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary (1898), *rún* means "a whisper, hence speech not intended to be overheard, confidence, counsel, consultation." The word *mede* doesn't seem to appear, but the word *máde* does appear and means a mead[archaic word for meadow] or meadow. Note that the word *runieg*, indicated above, is possibly the word *rún* + *ieg*. Although *runieg* does not appear in Bosworth, the word *ig* does appear and means island. For example, the word *igland* means island. Other sources indicate that *ieg* means island or land situated on a stream or between two streams. Very interesting!

The entry for Runnymede in Wikipedia indicates that "Runnymede is a water-meadow alongside the River Thames" and

"The name Runnymede refers to land in public and National Trust ownership in the Thames flood plain south-west of the river between Old Windsor and Egham." This seems to indicate occasional flooding in Runnymede due to the River Thames over-spilling its banks. Looking at a topographical map of Magna Carta Island and its surrounding area, shown on the following page, the low areas are nearest the River Thames. Those areas in red are the highest elevations and the greens and blues are the lowest elevations. This probably confirms the "flood plain" comment from Wikipedia above.

So, it seems that the original Anglo-Saxon spelling has morphed over the years into the spelling most commonly used today: Runnymede. It's possible that Jerome placed the word Runningmede in double-quotes knowing how many different spellings there are of the word. Another Jerome joke? Possibly.



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## **Appendix A**

1. None.

## **Appendix B**

1. None.

## **Appendix C**

1. None.

## **Appendix D**

1. Images of Lock Operations ==> By Cmglee - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15206003>

## **Appendix E**

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2. Topographical Map of Magna Carta Island and surrounding area from <https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/>.







